

METROPOLITAN POLICE

S.B. No. 1 (Filmsy)

SPECIAL BRANCH

Special Report

7th day of November, 1977

SUBJECT GRUNWICK

PROCESSING

LABORATORIES LTD.

Reference to Papers

34 77/11

1. The latest, and possibly the last, major confrontation in the fifteen-month-old dispute between Grunwick strikers and the Company occurred today, Monday, 7 November. The Strike Committee, nurtured and guided by the Communist Party in particular, and with varying support from the Ultra Left, militant rank and file trade unionists, Asian workers, and students, mounted a steadily growing campaign throughout the country during the last three weeks to make Monday, 7 November a 'Day of Reckoning'. The significance of this date is that it coincides with the start of an appeal by A.C.A.S., the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, to the House of Lords, that its ballot held at the Film Processing Laboratories was valid, the Appeal Court having earlier this year overturned a High Court judgement in their favour. The Committee therefore seized this opportunity for propaganda purposes to remind the highest legal authority, whilst actually hearing arguments about the dispute, that there is still widespread dissatisfaction with the Appeal Court's finding. They also hoped that it would provide a focus in their endeavours to stop Grunwick once and for all.

2. In the words of the Strike Committee, "This case cannot resolve the dispute because the law is weak and the case, even if won, would only resolve the question of recognition, not re-instatement. Recognition without re-instatement is meaningless." Their main strike poster proclaimed, "From Tolpuddle to Tonyandy, from the Matchgirls to the Miners, working people have fought for the right to organize. Trade Unionism is now under attack at Grunwick. A defeat for us would be a defeat for the whole working class."

3. There is no doubt that the Ultra Left put a great deal of effort into the fomentation of today's demonstration. They realise, as do the Strike Committee, that if the House of Lords rules against A.C.A.S. the campaign will have suffered a severe setback, and, with a further rallying point lost and a natural waning of enthusiasm during the winter months ahead, the strike might gradually collapse and die, leaving the Left Wing with the bitter taste of defeat.

4. APEX, the union negotiating for recognition, told its members not to support the picket and asked other trade unions to tell their members to do likewise, hoping that they will eventually gain success through the due processes of law or, failing that, that the T.U.C. will give the strike official backing and, by so doing, enable APEX to bring more power to bear on the dispute. This action does not suit the Ultra Left who all along have hoped to bring the Laboratories to a halt by force and to be rewarded by them, as a victory for the

working class, the mass picket would have to (1) stop the bus carrying non-union labour into the factory, and/or (2) provoke a major confrontation with police. The former, if it could be done, would provide fresh heart and impetus to the strike. The latter would give a fillip to the Ultra Left whose objectives might more easily be achieved with the breakdown of law and order. Additionally, a large-scale confrontation would supply them with useful propaganda material to supplement their repeated allegations of the 'repression of strikers by brutal police' and aid their objective of curbing police powers at such disputes.

5. To achieve this end, the Strike Committee and supporters actively canvassed throughout the country and, in particular, held a series of meetings with officials of the mineworkers, steelworkers and carworkers, together with members of Trades Councils and university students. It was obviously hoped that a number of large groups, scattered amongst the picket lines, making individual efforts, might succeed in breaking the police cordon and stop the Grunwick bus. Smaller, more violently inclined groups, such as the Socialist Workers Party, could then be relied upon to try to further inflame the situation.

6. According to delicate sources, amongst tactics discussed during the recent Strike Committee tour of the Midlands, Yorkshire, and South Wales, were attempts to (1) sabotage the bus in its garage prior to its departure on the Monday morning, (2) overturn the Special Patrol Group Ford Transit carrier preceding the bus, (3) break-through of the police cordon by members of the Indian Workers Association and (4) a sit-down by members of the National Union of School Students in the path of the bus.

7. As a show of strength and solidarity the Strike Committee hoped for an attendance of 10,000 supporters and all Left Wing periodicals prominently featured the call for a mass picket and enjoined their readers to attend the 'Day of Reckoning'. Advanced information suggested that support would be forthcoming from many provincial centres and that further participants would come from areas throughout the United Kingdom, but that these groups of supporters were small in number, in most cases entailing the hiring of only one coach, and that the bulk of the support would come from Birmingham and the mining areas of Yorkshire. It was estimated that 80 coaches would be bringing some 3,000 supporters from outside London and at least a similar number would take part from within the London area.

8. In the event, the total estimated attendance was put between 6,000 and 8,000 persons. In spite of the pre-planning by the Strike Committee and their supporters, their first objective, the stopping of the Grunwick bus, was defeated. However, quite violent confrontations did take place between police and the demonstrators, resulting in 111 arrests, injuries to police and demonstrators alike and some damage to private property. The Ultra Left will

have been heartened by the commitment shown by those on the picket line and they and the Strike Committee encouraged to continue their struggle.

9. The day, fairly warm, dry but overcast, started quietly. In Chapter Road, N.W.10 the first ten pickets arrived outside Grunwick's main entrance shortly before 5 a.m. At 6.30 a.m., the designated start of the 'Mass Picket', there was altogether about 1,200 persons gathered on both sides of the factory gate. A further 200 were reported at the entrance of Cooper Road, N.W.10. Fairly large groups began to make their way to these points and some contingents on leaving their coaches, formed up and marched along the main road, Dudden Hill Lane, N.W.10, to the Grunwick premises. They were prevented from entering Cooper Road by police cordons and many people thronged around the entrances and on the pavement of the main road opposite Chapter and Cooper Roads. A further police cordon was drawn half way down the west section of Chapter Road. Bereft of any apparent instructions, the participants were left to mill around, and a large percentage made their way to the east end of Chapter Road, via Deacon Road, to try to listen to speeches by picket leaders who were outside the factory gates. At 8 a.m. the first arrest occurred in Chapter Road. As the prisoner was being led towards the factory gates a surge of pickets broke through the police cordon near him. This led to a prolonged skirmish between protesters and police and put a stop to the addresses of several unidentified speakers at the firm's entrance. About 20 arrests took place before police restored order. In the meantime, a further 1,000 participants, appearing to be mainly members of Trotskyist organisations, formed up in the centre of the road about 80 yards from the factory entrance. They refused to budge and at 8.30 a.m. police used force to move them back on to the pavement and further arrests occurred. Within half an hour about 2,000 demonstrators had reformed 20 yards further up the road and solidly blocked it once more. Two parked cars in their midst were pulled across the road to form a barricade and their tyres deflated. At 9.30 a.m. a strong force of uniform officers approached this group from the rear and commenced to clear the roadway. The most militant participants did not move on, but sought refuge in the front gardens of nearby houses from which they threw house-bricks and other missiles. Fierce fighting broke out as police tried to clear these areas and police and demonstrators alike were injured in the ensuing melee. Thereafter police refused to let the demonstrators regroup and, moving them gradually back along Chapter Road, succeeded in clearing the road by 10 a.m. The bulk of the demonstrators then began to assemble in Sandringham Road, but on hearing that the Grunwick bus had successfully entered the Film Laboratories, via the Cooper Road, North entrance, they began to disperse. However, a small mini van equipped with a public address system, driven by Lee BURT, toured the main road and surrounding areas calling on demonstrators to go to Cooper Road for a meeting. The demonstrators then moved away from side roads in the vicinity of Chapter Road and proceeded to Cooper Road.

[REDACTED]

10. Throughout the picket, the lack of organization and leadership was very apparent. Other than at Chapter Road the demonstrators appeared to have no plan of action. One major incident occurred at 7.38 a.m. when about 600 demonstrators marched North along Dudden Hill Lane, N.W.10, past Chapter and Cooper Roads and then made for the north entrance to Cooper Road where they stopped in confusion. They then linked arms and spilled across the roadway, completely blocking the main road and it was some little time before the police succeeded in dispersing the crowd and traffic was able to move freely once more. A small group remained at this entrance and at 9 o'clock were addressed by Tom DURKIN, Fiona McENTYRE, and an unidentified, middle-aged, postal worker. They congratulated those present on their support, urged them to continue the fight if it was not won that day, and reiterated the usual sentiments about 'scab' workers and the Grumwick management. The postal worker roundly condemned Tom JACKSON and his useless resolutions and urged union chiefs to call for the cutting of essential services to Grumwick's. Those present could only boo when, unexpectedly, the Grumwick bus drove through to the firm via this entrance at 9.43 a.m. and no incident occurred.

11. Following the violence that had occurred in Chapter Road, instigators were quickly behind the scenes, calling on demonstrators to attend a meeting in Cooper Road to discuss police action that morning, the police having at first refused and then permitted the Strike Committee to hold an impromptu meeting there. At 10.30 a.m. some 1,500 to 2,000 persons were assembled in Cooper Road. George SMITH, who chaired the meeting, introduced Martin FLANNERY, Mrs. DESAI, Jack DROMY and Les SWENTING, all of whom made short addresses praising the resilience of the strikers and all roundly condemned police action. Those present were called on to march to Willenden Green Police Station to pursue their grievances. This was greeted with shouts of, "occupy the police station."

12. At 11 a.m., the crowd formed up and marched south along Dudden Hill Lane and High Road, Willenden, to Willenden Green Police Station. There, some 1,500 were again addressed by Tom DURKIN, Jack DROMY, Mrs. DESAI and Les BENT. DURKIN demanded that a deputation be allowed to visit the station to put forward their complaints and a small group, consisting of Martin FLANNERY, M.P., Peter KAVANAGH (TCWU No. 1 Region), Mrs. DESAI, Paul FRANKLYN (Brent East Labour Party), Leslie SWENTING (Secretary, Kent NUN), Jack DROMY and Tom DURKIN, were permitted to call at the police station at 11.50 a.m. They complained of the "organised violence of police at the instigation of the officer in charge; the serious number of individual assaults; the smashing of press cameras and the damage caused to trade union banners." Afterwards, Jack DROMY announced that the Strike Committee would be calling on all trade unionists to support a one-day national stoppage to take place in four to five weeks time. He said that the female members of the Strike Committee were going on a hunger strike and would be on hunger strike later

[REDACTED]

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this week outside Transport House when the TUC were to meet there. He called on members of the press to inform their readers of the true level of police violence. Mrs. IESAI said that their complaints today, like all others made in the past against police, would not be dealt with. Mrs. IESAI and Les BURT then called on the crowd to disperse and announced that the Strike Committee were returning to their campaign headquarters at Brent Trades Hall, 375 High Road, N.W.10 for a press conference. The demonstrators, their anger then subsiding, dispersed quietly.

13. Police injuries were put at 42 injured, nine of whom required hospital treatment, but only one officer was detained for further examination.

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Detective Inspector.

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**A. Dickinson**

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT 'C' SQUAD.

Appendix of banners and organisations seen during Grunwick  
'Day of Action' on 7.11.1977.

A.S.L.E.F. (Scottish Branch)  
A.U.E.W.  
Bath Trades Council.  
B.B.C. Centre A.C.T.T.  
Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council  
British Leyland (Longbridge).  
Bristol Trades Council.  
Ealing Trades Council.  
Falmouth and Camborne Labour Party.  
Goldsmith College Students Union.  
Harlech College Students Union.  
Iranian Students Society.  
Kent University Students Union.  
Kingston Polytechnic Students Union.  
Labour Party Young Socialists.  
N.A.L.G.O. (Westminster).  
N.A.L.G.O. (Southwark).  
N.U.R. (Paddington).  
National Union of Seamen.  
National Union of Students.  
Preston Trades Council.  
Rolls Royce.  
Royal Group of Decks Shop Stewards.  
Ruskin College Students Union.  
S.O.G.A.T. (Local Central Branch).  
U.C.A.T.T. (London Region).

