

Victory for Wildcat Traffic Wardens from front page

regard to a ballot, we balloted their members and it was a 100% response, and I think that was the tipping scale, for the company, when they realised that traffic attendants were going to come out on all-out strike if we weren't reinstated. They realised their profit margins would then be lowered, it was then a one-way ticket at that stage."

After four-months of putting pressure on NCP bosses, which included travelling to other cities to drum-up support, the workers were finally getting somewhere – "we had representation to Conor Murphy, the Department for Regional Development... he then challenged the company on their rules and regulations, their harassment, and the company then decided to meet us."

During these meetings, it became clear that the bosses would consider reinstating some of the 28 staff, but not all, 'troublemakers' wouldn't be welcomed – "when they met us initially they said there was two people they didn't want back, and on the second occasion they said there was SEVEN people they didn't want back... on the third occasion when we met them, they basically surrendered." The sacked workers, all 28, were then offered full reinstatement, or a significant financial package, which the traffic attendant were all delighted with.

Speaking about the future, the NCP worker said, "most people haven't made up their minds yet, but at this point, I believe most of us hopefully will go back, re-organise, and make the branch stronger, through our

experiences."

Not only had the workers won their demand, but they had grown substantially in confidence, with valuable lessons learned that will impact on future workplace organisation, "If any situations like this arise again, we'll be better placed to take action against the company"

Some of the hardships they experienced during the four-month protest period, including living on strike-pay were discussed, "we were given strike-pay by the union, wasn't very much but we were thankful for it, and we rallied round each other, done fundraisers, all sorts to try and help each other financially, and succeeded for the four months. It wasn't easy, I think when workers get together in a solidarity campaign...I think the

morale is usually kept quite high when you've got focus, and you really wanna go for something against bad employers".

The direct action taken by the traffic wardens won them their jobs back. "If we had of walked-away the day we were sacked, we would have got nothing."

This example of solidarity, and determined, sustained direct action by workers, against their bosses, is an example to all workers in struggle. The NCP worker concluded with a message of encouragement for Vestas and Thomas Cook workers, and all workers in struggle, "They will succeed, people will come-out and support them...you will succeed if you stick together, that's the message I would send to anyone."

Visteon: Some Reflections

On the 18th May the Belfast Visteon occupation ended, at the time a member of Organise! said:

The Belfast workers ended their occupation today and walked out of the factory in order of years served. For those waiting outside the gates to see them out, it was as one person commented, more like waiting for a funeral to pass than a celebration. At a buffet at a nearby hotel, speakers vowed that action will continue for their pensions, and support was urged for Rob Williams.

Hundreds of workers at Visteon plants across the UK were made redundant. In response, workers occupied the plants and, in doing so, demonstrated that any protection we might have from the ravages of this recession will come not from the generosity of employers, politicians or trade union bosses but from the action we take as the rank and file.

The 1st issue of the Leveller has reports on the background of this dispute and the manner in which Ford reneged on commitments to maintaining the workers original terms and conditions. When the company called in the administrators and closed the factories in Belfast, Basildon (Essex) and Enfield (north London), 610 workers were sacked with only minutes notice. The company declared insolvency and was put in receivership without word about where pensions and redundancy payments would come from. Workers who had been employed for 20, 30 and even 40 years were within minutes out of a job and told they would get nothing.

The Belfast workers acted that same day, immediately occupying their factory with hundreds of local supporters soon arriving at the factory gates. When news travelled the next day, the Basildon and Enfield workers followed suit. Though the

Basildon occupation was extremely brief, the Enfield occupation lasted nine days while the Belfast workers held on for well over a month.

Union officials tried to work out a settlement without keeping the workers involved but eventually, the workers' resolve forced Ford to the table – a table they had initially claimed had nothing to do with them. After workers agreed to call off a 30-strong picket at Ford's Bridgend plant in Wales, Ford managed to put together a new, much improved deal, which the workers voted to accept. This deal represented a significant improvement on the sweet fa workers were told to fuck off with at the end of March. In that respect it is a significant victory won by the workers themselves. The action of Belfast workers in particular, and their ability to hold onto the plant for the duration of the dispute was essential to forcing an improved offer on redundancy from Ford.

Unite failed to even mention the strike on their website or make any effort to rally it's membership's support for the dispute. This unwillingness to support the strike also manifested itself through the culture of secrecy which Unite maintained around the details of any negotiations. For instance, after the negotiations in New York City, the union announced that a deal had been negotiated and that the occupation in Enfield should end by noon the next day. No details of the deal would be released until the following Tuesday 14th, however, and this then turned out to be the insulting 16 weeks pay offer. Similarly, with the final deal, the union did not give people a printed document of the settlement nor time enough to consider the deal and discuss what it meant for different groups of workers. The result of this was that some sections of the workforce got a significantly worse

deal than others. Rushing through acceptance was deliberate on the union's part, as was the arrangement whereby the more militant Belfast workers voted on whether to accept after their counterparts in Enfield and Basildon. Many in Belfast felt they should be allowed time to read the deal first; many more voted against the deal than in Enfield or Basildon and it would have been a lot more had the two factories not already accepted. On both counts, the actions of the union were not with the intention of securing the best deal for its members, but of ending the dispute quickly.

Slamming the deal as stinking of inequality, Fra Gillen, a Belfast Visteon occupier said:

Personally, I feel betrayed by my national officials. Why did they not fight to get us parity? I feel we are being treated like third class citizens under this deal.

This is not a problem of 'poor leadership' or of the union not doing its job properly but the union doing it too well. Official unions are supposed to mediate between workers and bosses and our highly paid trade union leaders do not share our interests. There comes a point in all struggles where workers will find ourselves fighting our union in order to effectively fight our employer.

The only way to resolve this problem is for the rank and file to take direct control of their struggles and trust in the power of collective direct action. In Belfast, their militancy meant that employers had to relinquish control of the plant for the entirety of the dispute while attempting to attack the less militant workers in Enfield and Basildon.

It's important to understand that the deal which the workers secured was won by the strength of their actions alone and despite – not because of – their union's intervention. Furthermore, their struggle showed us, yet again, that when we fight back effectively it poses not only a threat to our employers but also to those who would claim to represent us.

Strike Threat Wins Reinstatement for Shop Steward Rob Williams

Rob Williams was sacked from his position as Union Convenor at Swansea Linamar (formerly Visteon) in April after consistently defending the workers' terms of employment and their wages, and he also played a part in the Visteon plant occupations and protests after many of them were laid off without pay. Support for his case was growing all around the UK and Ireland (also in the USA were Linamars suppliers backed industrial action) and workers were due to begin an indifinate strike in the plant just as Rob was reinsated by company bosses on the 11th of June.

A strike ballot was held and there was an 88% turnout with workers voting 139 to 19 in favour of all out strike action in solidarity with their workmate Rob. These workers have shown the power behind the threat of an all out strike. This is yet again another example of how solidarity is strength and how workers taking militant action can triumph in the face of intimidation from bosses.

At a time were the labour movement in the UK has been tainted by moronic national pride this is indeed a reminder of the need for workers to unite internationally to fight a global enemy.