

Leadership, Mobilisation and the 1986-87 'News International' dispute

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Introduction

The election of a Conservative government in 1979 triggered the start of a sustained and determined attack on organised labour not seen since the 1920s. The introduction of anti-union legislation to curtail 'union power' put unions firmly on the back foot. Workers and their unions were effectively forced to conduct a series of high profile strikes in the 1980s with only one hand free. Despite this handicap defeats were not inevitable, although some union leaders seemed to subscribe to this view. The rupture in class solidarity, exposed in the morale-sapping defeat of the miners in 1985, enabled those union leaders advocating a policy of collaboration with the employers, known as 'new realism', to gain ground. This was the prevailing climate when Rupert Murdoch, proprietor of *The Sun*, *News of the World*, *The Times* and *Sunday Times*, unleashed a well-prepared attack on his unionised workforce in Fleet Street, which culminated in the sacking of 5,500 print workers.

After the 1984/5 miner's strike the News International dispute occupies one of the most important places in the history of industrial conflict in 1980s Britain. Melvern captured the drama of this dispute in her investigative report of events published in November 1986.¹ Littleton provided a more exhaustive and reflective account in his book published in 1992.² And, in a more recent article, Bain offered an evaluation of the performance of the print union leadership during this dispute,³ but an evaluation that needs developing if we are to understand more fully the actions and interventions of print union leaders.

Bain argued that the eventual defeat of the print workers involved in the News International dispute was not a foregone conclusion. Using existing accounts and fresh evidence derived from interviews with some of the main actors, he contends that print union leaders were presented with three significant opportunities to pursue strategies that held out greater hopes of union victory than those actually taken.⁴ Notwithstanding other key variables, in particular employment legislation and the actions of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union

(EETPU) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC), he questions the efficacy of the print union leadership.

In this regard, however, Bain's field of investigation is rather limited. He leaves out of his examination some important actors from the wider print union constituency. Moreover, some meaningful lines of enquiry are not fully explored. To capture more fully the complexity of forces in play this article will identify and examine some of these omissions. But before doing so it is apt here to summarise Bain's position on two sets of circumstances when in his view the prospects for winning were within the grasp of the print unions and their members at News International. The first of these, he argued, was that if union leaders had campaigned in favour of and secured authorisation for industrial action before preparations at Wapping were too well-advanced this would have caught Murdoch at his most vulnerable. He cites evidence strongly suggesting that at this particular point in time industrial action would have inflicted heavy financial losses on Murdoch's company News International, which it was not in a position to bear. Thus a strike would have placed Murdoch under great pressure to abandon his alternative production plans and reach an accommodation with the print unions.

The second opportunity available to the print unions, advanced by Bain, was to draw other Fleet Street newspaper workers into the dispute. A strategy of widening the action could have improved the chances of victory. He cited the Mirror Group as a concrete example. In November 1985, Maxwell, publisher of Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN), attempted to force through mass redundancies on the threat of closure if the unions did not accede. He argues that if disputes in Fleet Street, such as this, had been fought in conjunction with the conflict at News International, even within the constraints of anti-union legislation, the outcome may well have been different.

In identifying and examining the choices open to print union leaders Bain rightly advances the merits of combining the News International conflict with other disputes and struggles in Fleet Street, especially those with Maxwell, but the argument needs developing. Moreover, in regard to assessing the efficacy of print union leaders Bain leaves out of the equation some of the key actors and circumstances; significant

omissions in a dispute that placed the future of SOGAT 82 (henceforth referred to as SOGAT) in serious jeopardy. In the light of fresh evidence this paper will revisit Bain's thesis and then turn to address some of those key circumstances missing from his analysis. Its central aim is to analyse the performance of SOGAT leaders in relation to events and problems in the provinces, particularly the south west, and the divisions between the NGA and SOGAT 82, as well as the crisis facing the print unions in the national newspaper industry. Therefore, it is not the intention to produce another exhaustive account of the main events of the News International dispute. In any case this has been done elsewhere (see Melvern, Littleton and Bain) but where it is felt necessary a briefing of the relevant main events will accompany this investigation.

Recently attention has been given to the important role that union leadership plays in heading (or hindering) workers' struggles and orchestrating union strategy and tactics,⁵ a factor that was particularly significant in the News International dispute. It is not the intention here to engage with the age-old debate that a conservative bureaucratic trade union leadership serves to hold back a militant rank-and-file. Kelly has moved this debate on by replacing this rather crude analysis with a more discerning and dialectic view: 'Clearly there are 'conservative' officials and militant workers, but there are also militant officials and conservative workers, and the precise balance between these groups is likely to vary with circumstances.'⁶ Yet as Kelly and others acknowledge leadership plays a significant part in giving form and direction to membership demands and grievances as well as presiding over strategic and tactical manoeuvres. On a line of continuum union leadership may mobilise workers by co-ordinating and conducting collective action based on common feelings of injustice to containing workers' 'willingness to act' in order to pursue a settlement with employers at the bargaining table.⁷ To maintain unity of the union, as an organisational institution union, leaderships may indeed act to constrain rank-and-file action.⁸

The argument here is that an examination of the efficacy of SOGAT's leadership in the News International dispute requires a consideration of their actions in the context of tensions, dilemmas and contradictions that became particularly acute as a consequence of the dispute. However, within this difficult situational context winning

possibilities were available, although it must be noted that the SOGAT leadership comprised of an amalgam of forces and influences. Many leaders were based in the provinces and as such were physically (and socially) separated from the centre of power and activity in relation to the newspaper industry. The print union leadership here is defined to include those leaders that had some element of formal power whether they were paid or lay officials. On this measure, the leadership comprised the General Secretary of the union, Brenda Dean, full-time National Officers, the National Executive Council (NEC), the governing body of the union — the Biennial Delegate Council (BDC), Branch Secretaries, Branch Officers, Branch Committees, Fathers and Mothers of the Chapels (FOC/MOCs) and Chapel Committees.⁹

We begin our analysis by examining the situation in Fleet Street in the months leading up to the mass dismissal of News International's employees in January 1986 in light of additional and significant new evidence. This will add much weight to Bain's argument that print union leaders missed their best chance of defeating Murdoch as a consequence of eschewing strike action in 1985, before Wapping was ready, and failing to consider the possibility of broadening the dispute to include other Fleet Street newspapers.¹⁰ We then turn to look at the debilitating effect of fractious inter-union relations. Finally, the line of enquiry is extended to encompass the experience of union leaders in SOGAT Branches located outside of the London area, in particular the Bristol and West of England Branch. And instances where print union members in these areas could have been mobilised around common goals and grievances with national newspaper workers are explored. The intention is to reveal both the impact the dispute had on union Branches and the impact union Branches had on the course and nature of the dispute. In addition this line of enquiry captures the inner dynamics, tensions and difficulties faced by those influential print union leaders whose membership was not only outside the London area but drawn from general print rather than concentrated in the newspaper industry.

The Murdoch-Maxwell conundrum August 1985-December 1985: Was it a matter of a choice between two evils?

On 22 August 1985, not long after two print union moles, Tony Cappi and Terry Ellis, had presented convincing evidence to union leaders that Murdoch was working towards excluding his existing workforce from Wapping,¹¹ Maxwell suspended publication of his MGN newspaper titles and sent out 4,500 dismissal notices to his staff, the majority of whom were SOGAT members. Ostensibly, this action was taken in response to a lightening stoppage (Chapel meeting) by the NGA at the *Mirror* on 21 August called in protest at the proposal to move production of the *Sporting Life* outside of London.¹² Maxwell was capitalising on inter-union strife and the problems print unions faced in their attempt to re-establish talks to conclude a union agreement with News International over the printing of the proposed *London Post* at Wapping. The print unions feared that to concede to the relocation of the *Sporting Life* would also give Maxwell the green light to transfer his other titles outside of London in order to reduce production costs and secure flexible working practices.¹³ Maxwell put further pressure on the NGA. He took out a court injunction to get the NGA to revoke its instruction to members working at the Withy Grove plant in Manchester not to print the northern edition of the *Mirror*. This happened the day after Maxwell exchanged contracts with the International Thomson Group to take over the plant on 1 January 1986 subject to Maxwell and the print unions reaching agreement on redundancies and pay by 23 September 1985.¹⁴

On 2 September 1985 the NGA conceded to the relocation of the *Sporting Life* after Maxwell agreed to put the paper up for sale and absorb redundant staff within MGN. In addition, the settlement included the buying out of composers' bonuses, which Maxwell scathingly referred to as 'Spanish practices'.¹⁵ Packaged in this way the NGA believed the agreement would not be seen as a forerunner to the relocation of other MGN titles.¹⁶ This cleared the way for the resumption of the publication of MGN's titles on the following day. However, SOGAT expressed concern over the terms of the settlement and it was not until 12 September 1985 that a resolution was reached and protective dismissal notices of MGN staff were withdrawn.¹⁷

In the meantime, following a meeting with News International on 30 August, Dean had issued a statement concerning preparations for the production of the proposed *London Post* that contradicted the evidence received from her union moles Cappi and Ellis:

This morning we met with Mr Bruce Matthews [managing director] and Mr Pole-Carew [project leader at Wapping and a known virulent anti-unionist] and raised with them the concern of our membership. I am pleased to say that they both denied that any personnel were being recruited or were currently working in the premises [Wapping] being trained in jobs traditionally done by SOGAT members. The electricians and engineers working in the plant are engaged on the installation of electrical wiring and equipment.

Moreover,

SOGAT also contacted the EEPTU, who confirmed that their members working in Wapping were engaged on traditional electricians' work only and certainly were not doing any work which would normally be that of the members of SOGAT.¹⁸

It seems that the central leadership of SOGAT was too preoccupied in its fight with Maxwell, after he suspended the publication of MGN newspaper titles in his drive to relocate the production of the *Sporting Life*, to seriously challenge whether these assurances were bona fide. The central leadership's strategy was to get Murdoch to produce extra copies of *The Sun* to fill the void in the market created by the absence of the *Mirror* from newsagent's shelves, as a result of Maxwell suspending the publication of his newspaper titles and effectively locking out his workforce. The idea was to put pressure on Maxwell to resume publication of his titles and withdraw dismissal notices, as the 'temporary' loss of sales to *The Sun* could well have turned out to be more permanent.

During this 'lockout' period, at the end of August 1986, Dean toyed with the idea of approaching News International to produce a northern edition of *The Sun* on its printing presses in Glasgow.¹⁹ Then pressure was put to bear on upping *The Sun* print run in London. John Mitchell, Secretary of both the London Machine Branch (LMB) and the London District Council (LDC) persuaded *The Sun* machine Chapel to agree to print extra copy.²⁰ Ted Chard, Secretary of the London Central Branch (LCB), urged *The Sun* Publishing Chapel to handle this extra copy.²¹ In the absence of the Imperial FOC, the deputy Imperial FOC of *The Sun* Publishing Chapel, Tom Wells,

took the issue up with the company but negotiations foundered. On communicating this outcome to Chard he was accused of acting like a ‘little Caesar’, as his was the only Chapel at *The Sun* that had failed to reach an agreement with the company. According to Wells, Chard said that ‘Brenda Dean and himself had a good relationship with Matthews [managing director of News International] with regard to the new building [Wapping] and I [deputy FOC Wells] was putting this at risk.’²² As a result Wells conveyed to his Chapel Committee that in his view ‘with Ted Chard and Brenda Dean it would appear that our future is being decided without the Chapel Committee having a voice.’²³ After some discussion the Chapel Committee adjudged that Chard had misused his authority by trying to force the Chapel to break Chapel agreements in order to achieve his goal; delivery of extra copies of *The Sun* to newspaper outlets. The Committee passed a resolution to send a letter of protest to Chard in respect to what it described as ‘an unwarranted attack on their Chapel.’ However, the Chapel concluded its meeting by agreeing to handle extra copy provided it was not achieved at the expense of Chapel agreements.²⁴

Within a few days, on 5 September, it was reported that a dummy newspaper run had taken place in Wapping.²⁵ On 10 September, *The Sun* FOCs and the LCB, representing 1,328 News International workers, chiefly machine assistants and distribution workers,²⁶ met to discuss their concern over this dummy run. They concluded that no action be taken which might damage the forthcoming meeting with Murdoch, due at the end of the month:

It was the opinion of the meeting ... that to pull the plug out on titles currently produced could end in a lockout. The LCB has said that it doesn’t want to be involved in guerrilla action, and the LCB will continue in its efforts to make sure the EEPTU does not take over as the union having sole negotiating rights.²⁷

It was left to the London Machine Branch (LMB), representing 1,680 News International staff including print machine managers,²⁸ at an emergency meeting on 12 September to call for a twenty-four hour strike against the use of scab labour at Wapping. The meeting was unhappy that it was the only Branch calling for such action and the strike motion was lost.²⁹ Clearly the signals emanating from Dean, Chard (especially the pressure he brought to bear on *The Sun* Publishing Chapel),

Mitchell, the majority view of *The Sun* FOCs and the LCB, just two days before, served to influence LMB's decision to turn over their leadership's strike call. Also, the fact that no link was made between Murdoch's preparations to shift publications of his News international titles from Fleet Street to Wapping, with or without union agreement, and the dispute with Maxwell at MGN was an opportunity missed to inspire print workers to vote for collective strike action.

Returning to events at MGN, on 16 September three days after Maxwell had withdrawn protective dismissal notices SOGAT members at MGN voted to turn down a five per cent pay offer because of the productivity strings attached.³⁰ Clearly, Maxwell's dismissal threats had not cowed his SOGAT employees into submission. But plans to move newspaper production away from Fleet Street were gaining momentum. Maxwell proposed to relocate his titles by the end of 1987, Associated Newspapers (the Mail Group) early in 1988, and *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Sunday Telegraph* were also planning to follow suit. Eddie Shah,³¹ who was finalising negotiations for a single union agreement with EETPU, was planning to launch a new daily paper *Today* in the Spring of 1986. Maxwell also threatened to strike a single union deal with EETPU if the print unions representing his staff would not accept the transfer of MGN newspaper production out of central London.³² Despite his hostile stance, on 23 September, Maxwell struck an agreement with the NGA and SOGAT over staffing levels at his newly acquired printing plant, Withy Grove, in Manchester; although his purchase of the plant was not due to be finalised until 1 January 1986.³³ This was significant because at the time it was producing on contract the northern edition of the *News of the World*. There followed a few weeks of relative calm at MGN but elsewhere the picture was changing.

News broke in late September 1985 that News International had put in place an alternative newspaper distribution system, following a feasibility study carried out by Thomas Nationwide Transport (TNT).³⁴ Despite this public revelation that Murdoch had put himself in a position where he could circumvent the then current heavily unionised road-rail arrangement, print union leaders were complacent. Many of them were quietly confident that SOGAT still had a significant stranglehold on newspaper distribution. The FOC of W.H. Smith, newspaper wholesalers, Kings Cross, admitted at the Biennial Delegate Council (BDC) meeting in June 1986 that he thought that the

distribution of newspapers through TNT would fail. He said: ‘in our naivety we thought no problem, it cannot be done.’³⁵ Thus the print union leaders continued to believe they could negotiate entry into Wapping. They ignored the signs that Murdoch’s arrangement with TNT posed a real threat to SOGAT’s domination over wholesale distribution of national newspapers, in distribution centres outside of central London.

Three companies W H Smith, John Menzies and Surridge Dawson, supported by over one hundred small independent companies, controlled newspaper distribution to news-vendors. SOGAT had a post entry closed shop agreement with the three largest firms.³⁶ However, this masked the weakness of the union organisation within these companies. At the 1983 BDC, Bill Miles, SOGAT Officer responsible for national newspapers, described newspaper distribution as an area ‘where a large number of employees were moonlighting and there was no trade union activity at all’.³⁷

In the main these members were part-time male workers, some of whom held other jobs. Although the union had managed to organise them, their wages and conditions were poor in comparison with the national newspaper workers. In fact this prompted the following resolution to be placed before the 1984 BDC:

This conference deplores the vast difference between those members employed in production of national newspapers and those employed in the distribution of those newspapers, where the members work under the PWNDA [Provincial Wholesale Newspaper Distribution] agreement.³⁸

Print union leaders also failed to give due attention to Murdoch’s record in America. It was Michael Hicks, Imperial FOC of John Menzies, LMB member and member of the *Morning Star*—Communist Campaign Group, who at the 1983 BDC revealed how ruthless Murdoch could be:

In New York to get facsimile printing in, he brought scab labour from the Southern States, marched past the New York brothers and sisters on the picket of the union as it existed then, but no longer exists, and went through with shotgun guards, through the picket line.³⁹

Murdoch drew on the lessons of newspaper distribution from the *Washington Post* strike in America, where a crucial factor in the dispute was that independent, non-union circulation dealers delivered the *Post*. Ironically, SOGAT published Robert Kaiser's report 'The strike at the Washington Post' in its new technology report *The American Experience* seven months before News International workers finally decided to strike on 24 January 1986.⁴⁰

Despite these ominous signs the mood, immediately following the re-commencement of discussions over the *London Post* at the end of September 1985, was upbeat. Both Dean and Tony Dubbins, General Secretary of the NGA, came out of these discussions committed to proceed with further talks.⁴¹ The Imperial FOC of *The Sun* Publishing Chapel reported back the feelings of the leadership to his Chapel Committee. With some guarded optimism he remarked:

[I]t was felt that we should make every endeavour to get into the building [Wapping] and establish ourselves and then, if necessary fight for better conditions.⁴²

But within 24 hours Dean and Dubbins were faced with problems elsewhere in Fleet Street. They were called on to put an end to unofficial action in a long-running disagreement that resulted, on 1 October, with the loss of 46,000 copies of the *Financial Times*.⁴³ The dispute was over pay, staffing and work organisational changes but talks broke down and the *Financial Times* threatened legal action if disruptions to production continued.⁴⁴ Elsewhere in the newspaper industry trouble flared up again at Thomson Withy Grove printing plant concerning Maxwell's conditions for taking over the plant; this led SOGAT to organise a ballot on industrial action.⁴⁵ In Liverpool the NGA faced redundancies at the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo as the company moved towards direct input, displacing the work of compositors.⁴⁶ Newspaper proprietors were putting the print unions under severe pressure, but none more than Murdoch and Maxwell. If ever a time was ripe to take co-ordinated collective action in the newspaper industry in defence of jobs and against anti-union newspaper proprietors, this was it.

Despite Dean's claim at the 1986 BDC that she counselled strike action following the dry print run at Wapping her (and her lieutenants') actions were arguably at best duplicitous. Bain points out that 'she was silent on the LMB issue', that is in relation to the LMB's recommendation for a 24 hour strike.⁴⁷ However, one report from *The Sun*'s FOCs meeting on 10 September stated that Chard, Secretary of the LCB, who on more than one occasion claimed to speak for Dean 'insisted that no action be taken which might disrupt the talks with Murdoch in 10 days.'⁴⁸ Moreover, rather than mobilise Fleet Street workers around the common issues they faced the print union leadership tried to play Murdoch off against Maxwell in a newspaper circulation war urging its members to print extra copy of *The Sun*, when it deemed necessary, in order to press Maxwell into making concessions.

SOGAT continued to pursue this strategy in November 1985 despite the warning from Miles at the November SOGAT NEC meeting that 'News Group were capable of carrying out newspaper production at Wapping without the involvement of the traditional printing trade unions.'⁴⁹ Maxwell went on the attack threatening to close the *Mirror* if the print unions did not accede to the loss of a third of the MGN workforce by the end of November. Protective dismissal notices were issued and staff were informed that if they resisted the printing of MGN titles would be transferred to the British Newspaper Printing Corporation, a subsidiary of Maxwell's British Printing and Communications Corporation.⁵⁰ This action, however, was dependent on completing the purchase of Withy Grove printing plant where Maxwell planned to print the *Mirror* and some of his other MGN titles. But this purchase was in danger of collapse as the dispute between the print unions and the then owners of the plant, the International Thomson Group, over the pay settlement agreed in late September and the level of redundancy pay on offer, rumbled on. Copies of the northern edition of the *Mirror* printed under contract by Thomson Withy Grove plant were lost and London print workers refused to print the shortfall.⁵¹ This formed the backdrop to the ballot carried out, in early November, by SOGAT of its 3,500 members at MGN on whether to take industrial action to defend jobs. Maxwell warned that any disruption to production would lead to staff being dismissed without compensation.⁵² SOGAT prepared once again to do battle not by mobilising all its members employed in Fleet street but by clearing the way to produce extra copy of *The Sun* if Maxwell sacked his workforce. This time *The Sun* Publishing Chapel seemed to play its part by pledging

to make 'every effort to persuade the management to open up a line and employ extra staff to cope with additional copy' in the event of the *Mirror* not publishing.⁵³

On 19 November SOGAT announced that its members at MGN had voted 2 to 1 in favour of industrial action if dismissal notices were not withdrawn.⁵⁴ They were not and SOGAT members at MGN came out on strike at midday on Sunday 24 November.⁵⁵ Immediately *The Sun* Chapels were put under pressure to print extra copy from both management, 'co-operate or else you are in breach of contract', and the union. Chard sent a message to *The Sun* Publishing Chapel stating 'it was a must we beat Maxwell'.⁵⁶ The anti was upped by the EETPU who offered Maxwell a single union deal at MGN if the strike continued.⁵⁷ But in a more positive development the NGA machine managers at MGN refused to work with machine assistants who were not members of SOGAT.⁵⁸ This display of solidarity was not exploited. Rather than build on this act of unity by mobilising other Fleet Street workers Dean, on the following day, instructed her members to return to work after agreeing with Maxwell to conclude negotiations over job losses within two weeks on the understanding that dismissal notices would be suspended.

By the middle of December Maxwell had secured from Dean a commitment to greater flexibility between departments and an agreement to reduce his workforce by 2,000.⁵⁹ A significant opportunity to mobilise collective action among newspaper workers on a wide front was lost without a job being saved. Once the printing of Murdoch's newspaper titles had moved to Wapping the suggestion that Fleet Street should take solidarity action with News International workers, in the form of an all out strike, was confined to some left-wing groups and a small minority of newspaper workers.⁶⁰ Notably, however, the influential Communist Campaign Group (CCG) did not call for sympathy action by Fleet Street workers, echoing the opinion of many of the FOCs and their deputies directly involved in the dispute. For example, following the distribution of strike ballot papers a meeting was held on the 13 January of 4000 SOGAT members employed on *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *The Sun* and *News of the World*. At this meeting the deputy FOC of *The Sun* Printing Machine Chapel, Ernie Hardcastle, argued that:

The worst thing which could happen is for all Fleet Street to come out. If we are out on the cobbles we need people to produce extra copies because that is what will hurt Murdoch first.⁶¹

Inter-union rivalry: - examples from the provinces

The solidarity between the NGA and SOGAT shown in the MGN dispute was particularly significant, given that in 1985 relations between the two unions hit an all time low, making it even more tragic that print union leaders failed to capitalise on such a crucial development. There is no doubt that poor inter-union relations hampered the building of solidarity. This is not the place to trace the full history of this disunity but it is apposite to highlight where inter-union rivalries, along with sectionalism and parochialism, had limited the co-operation necessary to fight a dispute of this magnitude.

In the July 1985 issue of *Print*, the NGA journal, Dubbins expressed his anger over the role of SOGAT in the *Express and Star* dispute at Wolverhampton and Blacklake and the *Kent Messenger* dispute at Maidstone and Canterbury in an inflammatory tone: 'I have never seen from TUC affiliated unions such acts of treachery and opportunist behaviour.'⁶² SOGAT picked up the gauntlet and issued a special edition of their journal to refute the NGA's attack. Its editorial justified the publication of this special edition in a tenor that did little to ease the growing rift between the two unions: 'we have to respond. Continued false charges cannot be allowed to go unanswered.'⁶³ Counter claims were made by SOGAT including the accusation that NGA members working at *The Sun* and the *News of the World* were refusing to move to Wapping unless they took over SOGAT jobs.⁶⁴

Although there always have been inter-union disputes in the print industry, 1985 turned out to be a year of particular intense union rivalry between SOGAT and the NGA. The problems were recognised nationally. Bristol Trades Council was concerned enough to write to the local Branches of the NUJ, SOGAT and the NGA on 5 August 1985 in an attempt to set up a Bristol TUC Standing Committee for the Printing and Media Industry. The letter emphasised the importance of unity because 'at a time when the EETPU is reported as having signed an "exclusive recognition"

agreement with Eddie Shah on an alleged no strike basis it is more important than ever that there be some kind of friendly relationships between the other three trade unions'.⁶⁵ On this initiative a meeting with representatives of all three unions took place under the auspices of the Bristol Trades Council. It was agreed subject to the confirmation of the respective Branch Committees that further meetings should take place in an attempt to set up a liaison Committee. In a written report to his Branch Secretary, one SOGAT delegate at the meeting commented:

...Robert Maxwell, the multimillionaire publisher, has just sacked all his NGA workers at the Daily Mirror group and suspended the rest of his employees. Rupert Murdoch, proprietor of the 'Sun' and the 'News of the World' is moving to a £100 million new printing complex in the docks area of London's East End. Also the notorious Eddie Shah is shortly to start publishing a seven day a week daily newspaper, new technology is being introduced at a rapid pace, jobs are changing. The meeting called by the Trades Council reflected this crisis. ...[T]he officers of the Trades Council felt that there was a need for the print unions to fight the common enemy, the employer, rather than fight among themselves.⁶⁶

This report concluded with a request to the Branch Committee to support the call for a liaison Committee comprising representation from the NUJ, NGA and SOGAT. Here was an urgent plea to start on the road of unity among the print unions. It was rejected by the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee and no further meetings took place.⁶⁷ This decision reflected the deep distrust at all levels between the seemingly militant NGA and moderate SOGAT.

However, there are past examples where the hand of friendship crossed trade union demarcation lines. When he retired in January 1985, Bill Harding was the Imperial FOC of News Group newspapers. He had served 25 years consecutively on the London Machine Branch Committee and had been on the NATSOPA executive council for 14 years. He was selected by the Branch to act as FOC when Murdoch bought *The Sun* and the *News of the World* from IPC in 1969. He recalled that:

'NATSOPA at the time also showed the real hand of trade unionism by welcoming the 28 NGA machine minders who worked on the old 'Sun'.⁶⁸

However, concern over the possibility that NGA would steal SOGAT jobs, referred to above, is an expression of the intensity of inter-union rivalry that existed between the print unions, as newspaper proprietors stepped up their attacks on the print unions and their members. This rivalry extended to the electricians' union when, in 1983, the London Machine Branch of SOGAT signed up dissenter Electricians who worked in the newspaper industry from the EETPU. The EETPU reported SOGAT to the General Council of the TUC alleging that SOGAT had poached their members in contravention of the Bridlington Agreement. The TUC Disputes Committee upheld the allegation and SOGAT was instructed to return all the EETPU members that they had enrolled.⁶⁹

In May 1985 a SOGAT delegation, led by its General Secretary Brenda Dean, visited the United States and Canada. Its purpose was to study the impact of new technology, particularly in relation to the newspaper industry. The delegation came back with a view that opposing technological changes was not an option. They warned that technological change could bring about reductions in staffing levels and deskilling. In particular, they recognised that the 'lack of solidarity and co-operation between rival unions only assists the process.'⁷⁰ The policy of both SOGAT and the NGA had been for some time - one union for print. However, the gulf between rhetoric and reality in 1985 was as wide as it had ever been.

Leadership in the provincial Branches and the News International dispute

To purge or not to purge

From the very first day that Murdoch's newspaper titles were printed at Wapping, it became clear that picketing within the constraints of the law would not stop them from being distributed. Fortress Wapping, with its razor wire and cameras, supported by an army of police made sure that the bulk of the demonstrators were kept well away from the plant. However, the battle could have been won in the provinces. The NEC had sent out instructions, through its Branches, to direct its members working in newspaper distribution not to handle News International papers. For reasons already stated, with the exception of London, Merseyside and Glasgow districts, only a tiny

minority of members in wholesale distribution, responded to the call; and they were either dismissed or threatened with dismissal by their employers.⁷¹

This should have been no surprise to Dean and the NEC. However, it is arguable whether they could have foreseen the ingenuity of Murdoch and his advisors in finding a loophole in the law, which made the union instruction to its members in wholesale distribution not to handle Murdoch's papers unlawful. Murdoch obtained a high court injunction against SOGAT but the union eschewed compliance. As a result a fine of £25,000 was imposed on the union and its assets seized.⁷² Dean and the NEC were locked into union policy made at the 1984 union delegate conference. The final paragraph of this policy declared:

Conference further re-affirms its total commitment to the decisions reached at the Wembley Conference by the TUC: the past decisions made by our own Union's Conferences to defend the closed shop; not to comply with Thatcher's Anti-Trade union laws - to pay no fines or obey any injunctions imposed by Thatcher and her Courts through their vicious anti-trade union legislation.⁷³

This decision could not be ignored without good reason. The NEC were very conscious that this was Conference year. The BDC was due to be held at Scarborough in June. The dilemma facing the union leadership was that to purge contempt would inevitably lead the union away from supporting workers' struggles involving collective action and mobilisation to a union whose role was largely as a representative institution assigned to act as a mediator. In this scenario the union leadership decides what the interests of its members are in circumstances where the membership has been demobilised and consequently much less influential in the union's decision-making process.⁷⁴ The action of the TUC did little to help the SOGAT leadership in its dilemma. While SOGAT had embarked on a course of action that defied the law, the TUC General Council refrained from issuing an unlawful directive to the EETPU after finding them guilty of five of the seven charges brought against them by the print unions in respect to carrying out the work of their members. Both Dean and Dubbins wanted the TUC to direct the EETPU to order its members working on print workers' jobs in Wapping to stop. However, the TUC

backed away from breaking the law.⁷⁵ Instead, on Wednesday 5 February 1986, after a meeting that lasted over thirteen hours, the TUC issued a directive that the EETPU *inform* its members in Wapping that they were doing work normally carried out by members of other unions.

Subsequent to and no doubt influenced by this decision, SOGAT did not resist the process of sequestration. In fact under Dean's guidance it went out of its way to co-operate.⁷⁶ Dean's idea was to show to the public, and employers, that SOGAT reluctantly broke the law because they could see no other alternative. The union was thrown into turmoil with many of the small part-time Branches unable to operate. There is no doubt that the precarious financial position of these Branches, and many of the full-time provincial Branches, contributed to the decision reached on the 6 May 1986 by the NEC to proceed to purge its contempt of court, in regard to the News International dispute. At the Branch Secretaries' meeting immediately prior to this NEC meeting of the 34 speakers only 7 were opposed to purging while the rest were in favour claiming 'that they were conveying the wishes of their members and Branch Committees'.⁷⁷ The sacked printers and the London Branches reacted angrily. On hearing the news London's District Council of SOGAT issued a statement that declared its 'disgust and abhorrence' at this turn of events.⁷⁸

Significantly, however, London was not the only area to show displeasure at the NEC's decision. The SOGAT Wales and West Branch passed a motion expressing 'disapproval of the decision of the NEC in purging'.⁷⁹ And in the Bristol and West of England Branch there was a difference of opinion between the Branch Secretary and NEC member, Bernard Vowles, and the NEC lay member of the Branch, Cliff Hall. The former supported and had campaigned for the NEC to purge, the latter had consistently voted against. This difference was also reflected in the Branch Committee. At its meeting on 12 May 1986, the following resolution to be forwarded to the NEC was passed by 9 votes to 6:

This Branch Committee regrets the NEC's decision re News International taken on 6th May 1986. We believe that the decision taken is detrimental to the interests of our members and urge the NEC to re-impose the blacking (sic) of all News International titles.⁸⁰

The Branch Secretary was absent from this meeting but on hearing the decision he immediately challenged its legitimacy in a letter to Branch Committee members, an action that served to extricate him from passing on the Branch Committee view to the NEC. His argument was that at the April delegate meeting of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch delegates gave full support to the NEC in their decision *not* to purge its contempt of court.⁸¹ Perversely, Vowles interpretation of this decision was not that delegates supported the NEC's decision per se but supported the NEC in any decisions taken in relation to the News International dispute whatever they may be. He explained:

On the 21st April 1986 the quarterly (Branch) delegate meeting was held[.] [Y]ou will recall in the Agenda the News International dispute was discussed and debated[.] [T]he 6 o'clock News that night had reported that SOGAT'S NEC had decided NOT to purge contempt and to carry on the fight against Murdoch[.] [D]uring the debate it was recommended from the floor without dissent that the NEC knowing all the facts and background to the dispute should be supported in their actions against News International[.] [A]t the end of the report the meeting endorsed the report and its recommendations[.] This being so the Branch Committee does not have the power invested in it to now overturn the recommendation made at the delegate meeting, we are obliged to support the NEC in whatever decision they made.⁸²

This interpretation was not left unchallenged. One Branch Committee member responded in writing to Vowles concluding with these words: 'Where's democracy if no opposition views are allowed to be put forward'.⁸³ And at the Branch Committee meeting held on 2 June 1986, at which Vowles was present, the Committee decided that 'the resolution passed at the previous Branch Committee meeting [urging the NEC to re-impose its decision not to handle Murdoch's titles] would be relayed to the General Secretary [Brenda Dean].'⁸⁴

Picketing

Mass picketing and demonstrations at Wapping have been well-documented.⁸⁵ Yet, despite the huge turnout on these 'demonstrations' Murdoch managed to distribute his

papers throughout large parts of Britain from day one. However, he did not have it all his own way. In these early days Wapping was unable to produce enough copies of the *News of the World*. The northern edition of the paper was normally printed under contract, at the Withy Grove plant in Manchester, but print union members here refused to print it. Moreover, distribution was difficult, partly because of the picketing at the various distribution centres by the print unions and their supporters and partly because it was a whole new set up where one would expect to encounter some teething problems.

Due to the failure of the majority of SOGAT members, in the newspaper distribution trade, to respond to their NEC's instruction not to handle Murdoch's papers it fell upon the individual Branches of SOGAT to organise picketing of their own members at the various wholesale distribution centres. The Bristol and West of England Branch was one such case. Ten days after the commencement of the dispute its Branch Committee met and decided to set up a picket co-ordinating sub-Committee. This Committee joined forces with a similar group from the NGA Bristol Branch to meet as one body at the NGA Bristol office. Both groups were answerable to their respective Branch Committees. But it was noticeable from the beginning that the SOGAT full-time Branch officials, along with some members of the Branch Committee, did not participate in these meetings and showed little interest in what they were doing, although a SOGAT area organiser attended from time to time.⁸⁶

For the first few weeks picketing was concentrated on W H Smiths, in the centre of Bristol, covering every night of the week. This was a big commitment especially as picketing hours were 1.30 am to 4 am in the morning, which in particular caused problems for the pickets who were employed on days. The response of the labour movement, bearing in mind that this was not a national dispute, was fairly substantial. This was in part due to the remnants of the miners' support groups and in part to hatred of '*The Sun*' newspaper. However, only on the few occasions where a hundred pickets or more were in attendance were TNT vans delayed from gaining entry into Smith's depot but then TNT arranged other drop off points. Therefore, the co-ordinating Committee turned its attention to organising picketing at the TNT depot at Chipping Sodbury two or three times a week. It was situated several miles outside Bristol on an unlit country road, a couple of miles from the motorway. Apart from the

problem of transporting large numbers of pickets to the depot it was an ideal place to picket. There were only two entrances, about one hundred yards apart. Fifty or sixty pickets were enough to block off those entrances. Some initial successes were achieved leading to a significant delay in the distribution of Murdoch's papers in the region. However, these 'successes' were rare as a heavy police presence prevented further significant delays.⁸⁷

The full-time officials in the Bristol and West of England Branch, like many other Branches in Britain, were certainly cool towards picketing. Although they participated they invariably kept a low profile or acted as a mediator between the police and demonstrators. On one organised pilgrimage to Wapping in support of the sacked News International print workers Vowles, the Branch Secretary, reasoned that the point of the trip was to parade the Branch banner not to join the picket line.⁸⁸ Two out of the three full-time Branch officials were Justices of the Peace; therefore it was not surprising that they saw the main chance of winning the dispute was through the boycott campaign. But officials closer to the dispute like Ann Field from the London Clerical Branch disagreed with this view:

But the boycott on its own cannot win this dispute. Irrespective of the problems of the law the direct struggle must go on. It is a major deception to think that one can win an industrial dispute without confrontation.⁸⁹

Support across the country was spasmodic but most areas established token pickets, with some areas like Bristol successfully organising mass pickets as the following two reports indicate:

Angry scenes erupted after members of the print union SOGAT 82 claimed that one of the pickets outside WH Smith, wholesalers in Newport, had been struck by a van. Union members then completely blocked the gates of the depot at Aragon Street and refused to move until police protection was provided.

The undercover distribution point has been established by management of W H Smith whose main depot is in Ord Street, Newcastle. Last night one hundred

pickets from newspaper print unions tried to block the distribution from Ord Street of *The Sun* and *The Times*.⁹⁰

The print unions, however, failed to set up a national or even a coherent regional network of 'flying' pickets. The organising Committee in Bristol was just that Bristol centric. Support groups similar to miners' support groups did materialise but only in the south eastern region. Representatives from the first 14 print support groups met on 6 March 1986 to form the union of print workers' support groups. The majority was from London Boroughs but there were also delegates from Reading and Portsmouth. They were campaigning for the building of support groups, organising mass picketing of Wapping and the breaking of the Tory anti-union laws. They also advocated the calling out of Fleet Street newspaper workers in order to escalate the dispute and advocated workers' control of the newspaper industry. Lawrence Jenkins, SOGAT 82 'Telegraph' worker speaking at the meeting said:

We've got to realise that new technology is something that is in the interests of print workers, but only if it is under workers' control. That is the key issue that all Fleet Street workers need to grasp.⁹¹

However, as previously implied there is no evidence that these support groups managed to establish anything like a national network. In turn, if the Bristol case is an indicator, picket co-ordinating Committees failed to communicate with each other and made no serious attempt to link with the support groups in and around London.

Industrial conflict in the provinces

What has been overlooked in the examination of the News International dispute is that print workers' jobs and conditions of employment were under attack across the country and in all sectors of the industry as well as newspapers. The number of confirmed redundancies in paper, print and publishing in 1984 was 5,985; 6,130 in 1985; and 9,354 in 1986.⁹² There was resistance to these attacks. The most prominent and bitter of these was the conflict at Maxwell's Scottish titles, the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*. This dispute halted production in March 1986 and led to Maxwell sacking 2,500 of his workforce in Scotland. It was three weeks before the dispute was finally settled and newspaper production re-commenced but at the cost of

accepting the axing of a quarter of the workforce.⁹³ At the same time other national newspapers made it known that they too intended to shed jobs on a significant scale. Express Newspapers, for instance, threatened closure at the beginning of April 1986 unless print unions agreed to accept proposals to cut over a third of the workforce.⁹⁴

The ripe conditions for widening the conflicts with Murdoch and Maxwell to the rest of the National newspaper industry were quickly passing, as companies took advantage of the disposition of many SOGAT's leaders to avoid getting embroiled in more disputes. Emblematic of this approach was the SOGAT response to the Express Newspapers' threat of closure. Bill Miles, SOGAT officer for national newspapers, immediately indicted his willingness to negotiate with the management of Express Newspapers rather than fight job losses:

I don't believe the company would threaten to close down without meaning it. I'm not in the risk business any longer.⁹⁵

Thus print workers often lacked the type of leadership support necessary to mobilise resistance to the restructuring and retrenchment taking place. But attacks on print workers were not solely confined to the newspaper industry. In the south west of England two significant instances arose during the critical early months of the Wapping dispute where the leadership was either hesitant or interceded to act as mediators in, rather than organisers of, an industrial dispute. In these particular situations, a more positive outcome for print workers may have resulted if they had been brought together to act in unison with the other major struggles the union had with Murdoch and Maxwell.

One such case was at Purnell's printing plant owned by Maxwell at Paulton near Bristol. This received little attention nationally despite the involvement of 240 workers and a loss of 25,200 working days between April and October 1986.⁹⁶ In January 1986, Maxwell announced his intention to make 185 employees at this plant redundant. In addition he called for a complete re-organisation of existing working practices and machine manning levels.⁹⁷ The NGA resisted but SOGAT settled with Maxwell by agreeing to let 82 of its members go on voluntary redundancy.⁹⁸ The day after this settlement, 4 April 1986, Maxwell sacked 184 NGA employees and

attempted to divide the workforce by paying SOGAT workers laid off as a result of the dispute.⁹⁹ There was ill-feeling between the print unions over the issue and it was reported that SOGAT was prepared to attempt to run the plant without the NGA as it became clear that Maxwell would not continue paying SOGAT members to stay at home.¹⁰⁰ On hearing this, the SOGAT Branch Committee passed a resolution to instruct SOGAT members not to cross picket lines.¹⁰¹ Over the next few months SOGAT members at Purnells refused to do NGA jobs and were congratulated by the Branch Committee for so doing, especially as in July Maxwell carried out his threat to close the plant.¹⁰² The dispute was not finally settled until October 1986 when the plant re-opened.

Another significant local dispute occurred at the Dickinson Robinson Group (DRG) in Bristol. On 20 February 1986 a SOGAT FOC representing clerical workers was sacked for refusing to leave his job and take the place of a colleague nominated by the company for redundancy before consultative procedures over redundancies had been exhausted.¹⁰³ A few days later 450 SOGAT shopfloor workers took unofficial strike action after five of their colleagues were suspended for refusing to carry out management instructions – action that was linked to the declaration of job losses, revised staffing levels and procedures and the dismissal of the SOGAT clerical FOC.¹⁰⁴ The SOGAT machine chapel FOC, George Bly, viewed the actions of DRG management as akin to what was happening in the Wapping dispute: ‘The company seems to be planning a Murdoch-style management and is violating our agreements and procedures’.¹⁰⁵ SOGAT full-time national officials were called in and they negotiated a settlement that included the recall of suspended employees but not the reinstatement of the sacked FOC.¹⁰⁶ This result went against the Bristol and West of England Branch Committee decision that supported the unofficial action taken at DRG and had stated that any settlement should include ‘the reinstatement of all sacked members.’¹⁰⁷ The national leadership seemed determined to avoid further industrial conflict at all costs. SOGAT was presenting itself to employers throughout the country, as a reasonable union. Dean's public image was good according to a poll commissioned by News International.¹⁰⁸ She was determined to keep it that way in the hope that the public would respond by supporting the boycott of Murdoch's newspaper titles.

These defeats served to isolate the sacked News International workers from the rest of the union. Identification with the struggle for the reinstatement of News International workers weakened as damage limitation through the acceptance of massive job cuts and changes in working practices became the dominant SOGAT strategy. By the time of the BDC conference in June the culture of 'new realism' had taken hold. Even delegates of the London Branches, the most strident supporters of 'direct action' capitulated to the central leadership of the union by withdrawing their motion condemning the action of the NEC in purging its contempt of court concerning its instruction not to handle Murdoch's titles.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, they supported the NEC motion which effectively said that the dispute would continue but within the constraints of the law and under the direct control of the NEC.¹¹⁰ But in truth this decision was the portent of the defeat to come.

Discussion – Conclusion

Apart from the well-documented explanations for the print workers' defeat in the News International dispute, in particular the conduct of the EEPTU, the actions of the SOGAT leadership stand out. While this dispute placed a heavy burden and great responsibility on SOGAT print union leaders, they were found wanting. Divisions, the lack of vision, errors of judgement and differences between those more inclined to mediate and those more prone to pursue direct action combined to isolate sacked News International workers from the rest of the union. Eschewing the development of a national organisational network of support groups was perhaps the most critical lapse. A national organisational network was necessary to embed the struggle against print employers' attacks on jobs and conditions in a coherent and potent form. In this way the common issues of injustice binding print workers together were more likely to get them to act in concert in a national demonstration of collective action (strikes and protests). Left as isolated pockets of action or indeed inaction without direction or leadership it is not surprising that divisions and differences between the actors surfaced often in the form of inter-union and intra-union splits and rivalry. It was almost inevitable that eventually the mediators rather than the organisers of collective action would win out.

There is little doubt that if, as Bain argued, the strike had been declared a month or two earlier Murdoch would not have been able to print his newspaper titles at

Wapping in the quantities he would have desired. Thus the outcome may have been very different. But the leadership entered into a dispute with Murdoch totally disarmed. The evidence indicates that as soon as Murdoch felt ready he baited the unions into taking strike action so that he could sack the union members who were involved. The facts also suggest that the trade unions had no other choice but to take strike action. However, one must question why a strategy for victory was not formulated. As this paper argues the SOGAT leadership should have realised that, apart from London and a couple of other areas, the wholesale distribution workers were highly unlikely to support a call for an embargo of Murdoch's titles. It was Miles, Dean's chief adviser, who highlighted this weakness of union organisation in the newspaper distribution trade at the 1983 BDC. These workers needed to be activated and well informed before the strike was declared. However, that is not to say the instruction to distribution workers not to handle Murdoch's titles was incorrect, but it was naive to think that it would be complied with. An option that was not seriously considered was to up the stakes and campaign for an all out strike of national newspaper workers. As this paper has shown there were plenty of opportunities to pursue this strategy including the possibility of spreading the dispute beyond the newspaper industry to other print workers outside of London in defence of jobs. The union of print workers support groups raised the possibility of widening the strike to include Fleet Street in March 1986. But by this time the window of opportunity was beginning to close and the likelihood that this small network could influence union policy was slight. Escalating the dispute was not on the agenda of the central leadership of SOGAT and nor was calling on the rest of Fleet Street to strike a policy of the London Branches. Thus the chances of winning the dispute even if SOGAT decided not to purge its contempt of court rested not on mobilising print union members on a wider front but on persuading the public to boycott Murdoch's newspaper titles.

Leadership, as Kelly and others have argued,¹¹¹ clearly is important in regard to mobilising (or indeed demobilising) workers in the face of attacks on jobs and conditions. It certainly did play a significant part in the outcome of the News International dispute. But to look solely at leadership in terms of a few high profile actors, even if they did carry more weight and influence is wrong. The weakness in Bain's assessment of the print union leadership is that only the central actors in the

dispute were really considered. Print union leaders not directly involved in the News International dispute were still affected by it and their conduct and voice contributed to shaping the approach to and direction of the dispute. The influence and action of Branch Secretaries across the country, for instance, clearly had an impact on the union purging its contempt. The reticence of London Branch leaders to strike early in the dispute and campaign for the widening the dispute to involve the rest of Fleet Street does not correspond with the militancy shown by print workers employed by Maxwell between August 1985 and early April 1986. Also of consequence was the failure of organisation Committees such as the one in Bristol to connect with support groups in the London area in order to establish more effective picketing. Branch Committees beyond passing resolutions seemed unable to formulate strategies to defend print workers jobs in their areas despite the associations with what was happening at News International. And fear of a financial melt down as a consequence of sequestration influenced the behaviour of some SOGAT print union leaders.

In truth, the print union leadership was unable to adjust its strategy to the change from compromise bargaining to the authoritarian industrial relations practice of Murdoch, Maxwell and some other large print and paper employers. Failure to do so along with the impact of repressive trade union legislation eventually put the mediators and militants among the print union leadership in the same albeit frosty camp. The lack of a strategic vision and inner cohesiveness among print union leaders at all levels resulted in the failure to cement the collective interests of its members in a way that was conducive to mobilising print workers in defence of jobs and working conditions across the country. That the policy of mediation rather than mobilisation emerged may well have been because the mediators were convinced they had the interests of the whole of the union membership in mind - the financial survival of the union. As Hyman argued, overall union leaderships often regard their role as the custodians of 'institutional needs'.¹¹² The locus of support for collective action came mainly from within the London Branches and that was limited to those employed on the distribution of News International titles and the call for EEPTU to stop strikebreaking and instruct their members to cease operating the printing presses in Wapping.

Thus, a very unfavourable legal and political climate and competing membership views and demands imposed formidable constraints on SOGAT leadership's ability to

forge strategies to unite the union. Given the failure of those leaders who supported continued defiance of the courts to call for the spreading industrial action to other firms pushing through restructuring and redundancies, it is not surprising that those backing an ordered retreat policy, in order to protect the union as an institution, triumphed.

¹ L. Melvern, *The End of the Street* (Methuen: 1986)

² S.M. Littleton, *The Wapping Dispute* (Avebury, Aldershot: 1992)

³ P. Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute: Was the Workers' Defeat Inevitable? *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 5 (Spring 1998), pp 73—105.

⁴ Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', pp 103—105.

⁵ J. Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations; Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, Routledge, 1998; R. Darlington, *The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism* (Mansell: 1994); R. Darlington, 'Shop stewards' leadership, left-wing activism and collective workplace union organisation', *Capital & Class* 76 (Spring 2002) 95—127.

⁶ J. Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics* (London, Verso: 1988) p. 182.

⁷ J. Kelly, 'Union militancy and social partnership' in P. Ackers, C. Smith and P. Smith (eds) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism* (London, Routledge: 1996) 77—109; C. Offe and H. Weisenthal, 'Two logics of collective action' in C. Offe, *Disorganised Capitalism*, (Cambridge, Polity Press: 1985) 170—221.

⁸ E. Batstone, I. Boraston and S. Frenkel, *Shop Stewards in Action* (Blackwell, Oxford: 1977), p. 27.

⁹ The Chapel is a democratic workplace institutional arm of the union under the leadership of a Father or Mother of the Chapel (FOC/MOC) and a Chapel Committee.

¹⁰ Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute'.

¹¹ Melvern, *The End*, p.p. 221-48.

¹² *Financial Times*, 23 August 1985.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *The Times*, 27 and 28 August 1985.

¹⁵ *Financial Times*, 3 September 1985.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 September, 3 September 1985.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 September 1985.

¹⁸ SOGAT press statement quoted in Melvern, *The End*, pp. 232—33.

¹⁹ *Financial Times*, 28 August 1985.

²⁰ Minutes of the Special SOGAT Chapel Committee meeting of *The Sun* Publishing Chapel, 3 September 1985.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*; According to the *The Times*, 31 August 1986, sales of *The Sun* increased by 10% while the *Mirror* was unavailable due to the dispute between Maxwell and the print unions. Moreover, *The Times* reported it could have been more but for the lack of agreement to produce extra copies.

²⁵ Melvern, *The End*, p. 234; Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', p. 78.

²⁶ Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', p. 79.

²⁷ Minutes of the SOGAT *Sun* Publishing Chapel Committee, 10 September 1985.

²⁸ Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', p. 79.

²⁹ Melvern, *The End*, pp. 234—235.

³⁰ *Financial Times*, 17 September 1985.

³¹ Eddie Shah was the owner of the Stockport Messenger Group. He showed that 'in the name of the rule of law and democracy' [M. Dickinson, *To Break a Union*, (Booklist: 1984) p. 12] that the most industrially militant union, the NGA, could be beaten, albeit in the backwoods of Warrington.

³² *Ibid.*, 20 September 1985.

³³ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1985.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27 September 1985.

³⁵ SOGAT, Report of the Biennial Delegate Meeting (Hereafter BDM Report), 1986, p. 144.

³⁶ Melvern, *The End*, p. 156.

³⁷ SOGAT, Report of the Delegate Council Policy Conference, 1983, p. 61.

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- ³⁸ SOGAT, BDM Report, 1984, p. 233.
- ³⁹ SOGAT, Report of the Delegate Council Policy Conference, 1983, p. 131.
- ⁴⁰ R. Kaiser, 'The strike at the Washington Post', *The American Experience*, SOGAT Study Group Report on New Technology in the Newspaper Industry, May 1985, pp. 25—42.
- ⁴¹ *Financial Times*, 1 October 1983.
- ⁴² Minutes of the SOGAT *Sun* Publishing Chapel Committee, 1 October 1985.
- ⁴³ *Financial Times*, 3 October 1985.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 October 1985.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21 October 1985.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 October, 24 October 1985.
- ⁴⁷ Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', p. 79.
- ⁴⁸ Minutes of the SOGAT *Sun* Publishing Chapel Committee, 10 September 1985.
- ⁴⁹ Minutes of the SOGAT NEC meeting, 6/7 November 1985.
- ⁵⁰ *Financial Times*, 5 November 1985.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*; *News Line*, 5 November 1985.
- ⁵² *Financial Times*, 5 November 1985.
- ⁵³ Minutes of the SOGAT *Sun* Publishing Chapel Committee, 12 November 1985.
- ⁵⁴ *Financial Times*, 20 November 1985.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1985.
- ⁵⁶ Minutes of the SOGAT *Sun* Publishing Chapel Special Committee Meeting, 25 November 1985.
- ⁵⁷ *Financial Times*, 25 November 1985.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 November 1985.
- ⁵⁹ *Financial Times*, 12 December 1985.
- ⁶⁰ *Socialist Worker Review*, February 1986, p.6; *Workers' Power*, leaflet 'The lessons one year on', undated.
- ⁶¹ Report of the meeting of SOGAT members employed by News Group Newspapers and Times Newspapers, 13 January 1986.
- ⁶² NGA Journal, *Print*, July 1985, p. 4.
- ⁶³ *SOGAT Journal*, special edition, July 1985, p.2.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.
- ⁶⁵ Letter from the Bristol Trades Council to the local Branches of the NGA, NUJ and SOGAT, 5 August 1985.
- ⁶⁶ Report on the Bristol TUC meeting for the Printing and Media industry, 26 August 1985.
- ⁶⁷ Letter to the SOGAT Bristol Trades Council delegate from B.H. Vowles, SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Secretary, 12 September 1985.
- ⁶⁸ *SOGAT Journal*, September 1985, p. 7.
- ⁶⁹ Melvern, *The End*, pp. 189—191.
- ⁷⁰ *The American Experience*, SOGAT Study Group Report on New Technology in the Newspaper Industry, May 1985, p.3.
- ⁷¹ For instance, W.H. Smith's in Coventry dismissed 11 SOGAT members for refusing to handle Murdoch's titles; Minutes of the SOGAT NEC meeting, 8 February 1986.
- ⁷² Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', p. 86.
- ⁷³ SOGAT, BDM Report, 1984, p. 307.
- ⁷⁴ Offe and Wessenthall, *Two logics*, p.211.
- ⁷⁵ Melvern, *The End*, pp. 200—214; Bain, 'The 1986-7 News International Dispute', p. 93.
- ⁷⁶ *Financial Times*, 11 February, 1986.
- ⁷⁷ Minutes of the SOGAT Branch Secretaries Meeting, 6 May 1986.
- ⁷⁸ Melvern, *The End*, p. 175.
- ⁷⁹ Minutes of the SOGAT NEC meeting, 2/3 June 1986.
- ⁸⁰ Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, 12 May 1986.
- ⁸¹ In other words the NEC refused to withdraw its instructions to its members in wholesale distribution not to handle Murdoch's newspaper titles despite being ordered by the court to do so.
- ⁸² Correspondence from B.H. Vowles, Branch Secretary of SOGAT Bristol and the West of England Branch to all Branch Committee members, 15 May 1986.
- ⁸³ Correspondence from M.J. Richardson, Branch Committee member of SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch, to B.H. Vowles, Branch Secretary, 17 May 1986.
- ⁸⁴ Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, 2 June 1986.
- ⁸⁵ *Policing Wapping: an account of the dispute 1986/7*, Police Monitoring and Research Group Briefing Paper No.3, London Strategic Policy Unit

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- ⁸⁶ See Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, March-July 1986; Author's notes as a participant.
- ⁸⁷ Author's notes as a participant.
- ⁸⁸ Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, 7 April 1986.
- ⁸⁹ *Communist Campaign Review*, Winter 1986/87, p.28.
- ⁹⁰ *SOGAT Strike Bulletin* No. 3, pp.2 and 3.
- ⁹¹ Author's notes as an attendee.
- ⁹² *Employment Gazette*, Vol. 95, 1987, London: HMSO.
- ⁹³ *Financial Times*, 3 April 1986.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 April 1986.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 March 1986.
- ⁹⁶ *Employment Gazette*, Vol. 95, 1987, London: HMSO.
- ⁹⁷ Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, 3 February 1986.
- ⁹⁸ *Western Daily Press*, 4 April 1986.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 April 1986;
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 April 1986.
- ¹⁰¹ Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, 12 May 1986.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 7 July 1986; *Financial Times*, 3 July 1986.
- ¹⁰³ Letter of dismissal from J. Shaw, production director, DRG Flexible Packaging to the SOGAT FOC of the Clerical Chapel, 20 February 1986.
- ¹⁰⁴ Correspondence from G. Bly FOC DRG SOGAT Machine Chapel to his chapel members, 25 February 1986.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Western Daily Press*, 1 and 3 March 1986.
- ¹⁰⁶ DRG Flexible Packaging, 'Resumption of work' agreement, 4 March 1986.
- ¹⁰⁷ Minutes of the SOGAT Bristol and West of England Branch Committee, 3 March 1986.
- ¹⁰⁸ Melvern, *The End*, p. 167.
- ¹⁰⁹ SOGAT, BDM Standing Orders Committee Report, No. 5, 1986, Emergency motion No. 2.
- ¹¹⁰ SOGAT, BDM Report, 1986, p. 147.
- ¹¹¹ J. Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*; R. Darlington, 'Shop stewards' leadership'; A. M. Greene, J. Black and P. Ackers 'The union makes us strong? A study of the dynamics of workplace union leadership at two UK manufacturing plants', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38: 1 (2000), pp. 75-93.
- ¹¹² R. Hyman, *Industrial Relations: a Marxist introduction*, (Macmillan, London: 1975) p. 90.