

LIVERPOOL Free Press

Fisher-Bendix takeover

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

PRICE: 1p (proceeds to Fisher-Bendix fighting fund)

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THE REASON WHY

The Liverpool Free Press has brought out this emergency supplement to provide a channel, however small, to explain the reasons behind the Fisher-Bendix workers' occupation of their factory.

On January 5 the Liverpool Echo considered a "human interest" story about a crash victim's escape from the Peruvian jungle to be more important to Merseysiders than the fight of 600 local people for the right to work — surely the final straw in the Post and Echo monopoly's policy of 'happy news' and trivia above all else.

Yet on January 6 the Echo's main headline announced:

FIRM'S SPARES ARE HIJACKED

Thus, the sanctity of the property of a multi-million pound company is considered more newsworthy than the futures of 600 workers and their families.

But this was only to be expected, for the Echo has never identified itself with the fight for a better future for the people who live in the area it 'serves'. Indeed, its entire editorial policy is geared to defusing the growing resentment of the people who make up the area's growing dole queues.

We firmly believe that the people of Merseyside are sick and tired of the Echo's candy-floss journalism. Surely the people of a depressed area are more concerned with jobs, houses and adequate welfare than the battle of the Atlantic and the January sales.



An emergency meeting of the Thorn Combine Stewards Committee will be held on Saturday, January 15 at the factory.



100,000 leaflets listing the Thorn companies to be blacked have been produced by the Fisher Bendix Stewards Committee. Supplies of these leaflets can be obtained from the committee at the factory in South Boundary Road, Kirkby, Lancs.

KIRKBY WORKERS

FIGHT THORN

THE TAKEOVER of the Fisher-Bendix Kirkby factory follows eleven years of chronic mismanagement, outright lies by Thorn and a callous disregard for men's livelihoods in the search for higher profits.

The fight is against the massive Thorn empire — with profits last year of £37,000,000 — which has decreed that the 600 workers must go to the wall to squeeze the profit margin a little higher.

Thorn earlier this year moved the production of Bendix tumble dryers from the Kirkby factory to have them made under licence by CARSA near Madrid in Spain. At the same time they negotiated with CARSA for the production of Bendix washing machines on the same basis. Now they are moving the production of radiators and electric storage heaters to their Newcastle subsidiaries.

Thorn lied when they denied that the Bendix tumble dryers were being made in Spain, in the face of allegations by the workers, backed up by irrefutable documentary evidence — copies of letters and contracts with CARSA.

Dismantle

And now Thorn have shown the extent of their brutal nature by ordering workers to dismantle machinery so that it can be transported elsewhere to do the same job.

Dismantle or be sacked was the order put out by Thorn immediately before the takeover.

The factory work force — at one time numbering around 2,500 — have been used as pawns, units of labour, finally to be bought up by the Thorn empire in May last year with the express purpose of trundling them onto the dole queues.

When Thorn bought the Parkinson-Cowan company for £4m their plans were clear: Maintain the profit-making concerns, sell off some surplus equipment, close the Kirkby factory, and take all the profitable lines elsewhere.

With a major £1m-a-year contract with Potterton radiators in their pocket, the Fisher-Bendix factory wasn't short of orders. This contract guarantees a minimum production of 270,000 radiators a year, building up to a maximum of 330,000 a year in 1973, with the contract subject to twelve months' notice of cancellation after that.

The Kirkby factory in South

Boundary Road has seen a succession of owners since it opened eleven years ago. The chronic mismanagement has led to the sacking of twelve successive managers. Number 13 was ordered out by the Fisher Bendix workers.

The owners — BMC, Parkinson-Cowan, and Thorn — have produced a succession of products at the factory under the labels Fisher Ludlow, and then Fisher Bendix.

Top quality products have been made by the workers at the factory, including quality sinks which were discontinued, Moulton bicycles (the profitable patent of which was sold to Raleigh) and now radiators and gas fires. But never have the men at the factory been given a chance. Management have constantly chopped and changed.

At a cost of £100,000 a huge Bliss press was installed in the factory two months ago, only to be planned for dismantling at the end of February.

In the past production lines have been set up by management only to be dismantled within weeks on management orders.

Wage rates

Thorn are determined in their efforts to disunite workers. In Britain different wage rates prevail at different factories for the same jobs.

In 1969 Sir Jules Thorn received dividends of £309,857, while the average wage of his 71,400 employees was £19 a week.

Wages rates for some women workers at Merthyr Tydfil, quoted in a Thorn Combine Shop Stewards Committee report, are £13.95 against £24 in Kirkby.

Skilled toolmakers in one area get £32 compared with £24 elsewhere.

The Kirkby fight is for the right to work, and against the absentee owners like Sir Jules Thorn, who holiday abroad while men and women and their families face the vicious fate of a dole queue.

It is a fight against the export of jobs in search of cheaper labour.

FACTS

Thorn Electrical Ltd had a massive turnover of £342,581,000 last year, and a profit of £37,212,000 — a record. They received £6,588,429 from the public investment allowances from 1962 to 1968.

They own over 70 major factories in Britain and 8 overseas. Their products are distributed throughout the world.

They own Radio Rentals and Domestic Electric Rentals
They own Radio Rentals and Domestic Electric Rentals — the two largest TV rental companies in Britain. Altogether they have 1,300 branches and over 3,000,000 television rental subscribers.

They make 45% of all TV sets manufactured in Britain.

BLACKED!

Thorn products are to be blacked in every port in support of the Fisher-Bendix takeover.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Port Shop Stewards Committee which met in London on January 8.

A list of Thorn firms and products has been produced by the Fisher Bendix Joint Shop Stewards Committee to back up their appeal for a national boycott of all Thorn products.

Massive support has been demonstrated for the takeover with backing and offers of financial help so far from: Burmah Oil site; Shell; teaching hospital site, Prescot Road; Union of Post Office Workers (Liverpool); 'A' Dock oil terminal; Bass-Charrington site (Monks); Run-corn; Plesseys, Kirkby and Edge Lane; Birds Eye, Kirkby; Pilkingtons; Fords; Heathrow Airport Pirrie Ward Labour Club, Liverpool Lydiat Labour Party; Liverpool Labour Party; Kirkby Labour Party; Women's Assembly of Great Britain.

Telegrams of solidarity from the three other occupied factories — UCS, Plesseys Alexandria and Allis Chalmers, Mold.