

BOYCOTT SPREADS

150 shop stewards representing thousands of Merseyside workers voted unanimously on Wednesday January 12 to back the Fisher Bendix takeover with a total one-day strike.

The stewards passed a resolution warning that they will take "all necessary steps to safeguard the freedom of the Fisher-Bendix workers to carry on with their peaceful occupation."

The stewards' backing came on the same day that Merseyside dockers voted to black all Thorn goods, and Heathrow Airport's senior steward said that all Thorn freight would be grounded.

The stewards' resolution also stated that financial support would be organised, Thorn goods would be blacked across the whole of Merseyside, and a mass picket will be held on Saturday, January 15, outside the factory at 11 a.m.

Already the national executive of CAWU - one of the unions involved in the takeover - has declared the action official.

Jack Spriggs, convenor of

the factory, told the Free Press:

"The nine-week strike convinced us that Thorn can be beaten. Now we are adopting a new way of tackling the combine. We will fight from within."

Tommy Staples, secretary of the Huyton, Kirkby and Prescot Trades Councils, and one of the workers in the occupation, said:

"The Trades Council are fully supporting our occupation, and intend mobilising the support of other factories on the Kirkby estate in token stoppages and mass pickets. It is the local build-up of support that is immediately important."

Archie Breeden, senior ETU steward added:

"We are now branching out and moving into the rest of the Thorn empire. We have a common policy with a number of factories to fight redundancies and maintain wages and conditions. We are appealing to these people and expect massive support."

Right behind the three shop floor unions, AUEW, T&G and ETU, are the staff unions, ASTMS, CAWU and TASS, who have acted together in occupying the administration block.

One of the first aims of the takeover was the removal of spares and supplies from the Fisher-Bendix Moorgate Road stores, which serves a large part of the North-West, to the main factory premises.

The Echo implied it was looting and theft. In fact, one of the proposals put by the unions to the management to help save the 600 jobs was the moving of these supplies into the main factory as an economy measure.

After taking over, the new owners just implemented their policies.

It also served the double purpose of hitting a blow at the Thorn combine and making the occupiers' task much easier by centralising it in the one place.

Thorn's public statement has warned ominously:

"We will take the appropriate action to protect our interests." Sacking after sacking, redundancy after redundancy, have been the way Thorn have 'protected' their main interest - profit - so far.

The Fisher-Bendix workers are protecting their interests by taking over the factory.

What to avoid

The men of Fisher-Bendix have appealed to shoppers not to buy any of Thorn's goods while the dispute is on.

Because Thorns make such a wide range of electrical and electronic goods, here is a list of those you are most likely to come across in the shops:

RADIO AND TELEVISION
Ferguson, HMV, Ultra, Baird, Marconiphone.

Rentals: Radio Rentals Ltd, Domestic Electric Rentals Ltd, Multi-broadcast Rentals Ltd and Home Rentals Ltd.

Thorn Radio Valves and Tubes is one of the two main manufacturers of tubes and valves for dom-

estic equipment - sold under brand names 'Mazda' and 'Brimar'.

LIGHTING

Mazda and Atlas products

DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

Electric, gas cookers etc under Tricity, Main, Moffat, Kenwood. Domestic central heating equipment - Thorn Heating Ltd.

A quick profit

Fisher-Bendix never stood a chance of becoming profitable once the giant Thorn Electricals moved in.

On April 2 1971 they made a paltry bid of less than £4m for Parkinson-Cowan, the company which owned the Kirkby firm.

The directors of Parkinson-Cowan jumped at the offer. But they shouldn't have.

For the directors of Thorn's realised the profitable potential of the Parkinson group.

The businessman's magazine, the Investor's Chronicle said in April last year:

"Thorn considers the deal as straightforward industrial sense as most of Parkinson's products dovetail in neatly with its own, and there is plenty of scope for rationalisation."

Profitable

In short, Parkinson's could be made profitable. Thorn's knew that in 1970 Parkinson's made a profit of £1.18 million, excluding Fisher-Bendix's loss.

They also knew that late in 1968 Parkinson-Cowan bought Fisher Bendix from BMC for £3.7 million.

So just 3½ years later Thorn's bought the whole of the Parkinson group for just pounds over what Fisher Bendix alone had been worth. And profitable is exactly what the Parkinson-Cowan group has turned out to be.

Thorn's have butchered the group. They have acted without regard for the men who work on the shopfloor and make their profits.

Just months after they took over, Thorn sold off one of Parkinson's subsidiaries for

£1.8 million cash.

On November 15 1971 they sold the subsidiaries Wild-Barfield Ltd., and G.W.B. Melting Furnaces Ltd. to Senior Engineering group.

With one blow they had recouped nearly half of what they had paid for the whole group. What's more they received cash which is exactly what Thorn's were crying out for at the time.

At Fisher-Bendix they were out to squeeze all the profits they could out of the firm.

Fisher-Bendix has made losses in the past - £485,000 during 1969-70, mainly due to inept and incompetent management.

But even in January 1971 the Investors' Chronicle had this to say about Fisher-Bendix:

"The radiator division is enjoying the boom of wet central heating. The domestic and commercial washing machine section is capable of holding its own and the general engineering section is doing well.

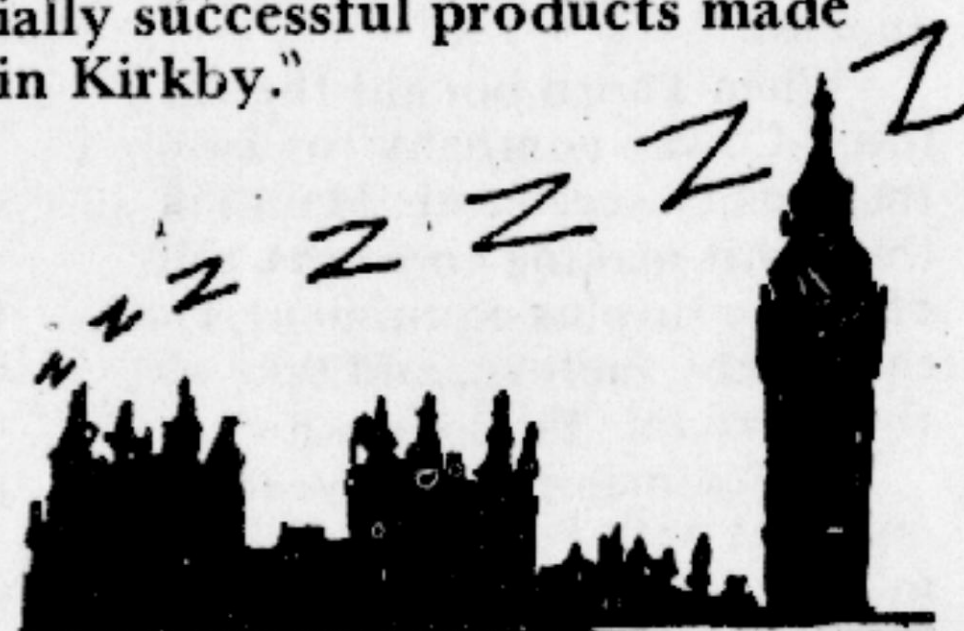
"The only laggard appears to be the sink division which is currently caught up in the building industry depression."

By the time Thorns took over the sink division was sold off. Given time, Fisher-Bendix could have turned the corner.

But Thorns couldn't wait. They wanted profits and cash immediately, even though they made £37.2m last year, and even though 600 men and women would lose their jobs.

Public money

A motion calling for an investigation into the investment grants poured into the Fisher Bendix factory, and an inquiry into the factory's operation has been put forward in the Commons by a group of Merseyside Labour MPs. This points out that the factory was built and equipped with a vast amount of public money and regrets "the decision to transfer valuable machinery to Spain, for production there of commercially successful products made in Kirkby."



Support wanted

IF THE occupation of Fisher-Bendix is to succeed, money will be needed to support it. The men themselves have been contributing to a special fund. So far £2,000 has been raised.

Donations should be sent to Bro, Tom Staples, 42 Kennelwood Avenue, Northwood, Kirkby.

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