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A Social Psychological Analysis of Strikes.

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## SUMMARY.

A participant observation method was employed in the study of a 20-week stoppage at Ansells Brewery Limited, a constituent company of Allied Breweries (U.K.). The strike, involving 1,000 workers, began in opposition to the implementation of a four-day working week and culminated in the permanent closure of the brewery. The three main phases of the strike's development (i.e., its initiation, maintenance and termination) were analysed according to a social-cognitive approach, based on the psychological imagery, beliefs, values and perceptions underlying the employees' behaviour.

Previous psychological treatments of strikes have tended to ignore many of the aspects of social definition, planning and coordination that are an integral part of industrial action. The present study is, therefore, unique in concentrating on the thought processes by which striking workers make sense of their current situation and collectively formulate an appropriate response.

The Ansells strike provides an especially vivid illustration of the ways in which the seminal insights of a small number of individuals are developed, via processes of communication and influence, into a consensual interpretation of reality. By adopting a historical perspective, it has been possible to demonstrate how contemporary definitions are shaped by the prior history of union-management relations, particularly with regard to: (a) the way that previous events were subjectively interpreted, and (b) the lessons that were learned on the basis of that experience.

The present approach is psychological insofar as it deals with the cognitive elements of strike action. However, to the extent that it draws from relevant sections of the industrial relations, organizational behaviour, sociology, anthropology and linguistics literatures, it can claim to be truly interdisciplinary.

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## INTRODUCTION.

On June 6th, 1981, one thousand Birmingham brewery workers voted at a mass meeting to call off their twenty-week stoppage against the company. A strike which began in opposition to a four-day working week ended as a vain attempt to overturn a decision to permanently close the brewery. Many newspaper accounts emphasised the hasty and apparently unreasoned nature of the workers' action. Here, we reject such superficial interpretations of their behaviour in favour of a social-cognitive approach which focuses on the type of beliefs, images and perceptions that made the strike a necessity for the hundreds of people involved.

### 1. An Overview of the Strike.

When Ansells Brewery Limited, a constituent company of the multi-national Allied-Lyons group, made known their intention to place workers at their Birmingham brewery on a four-day working week, it is unlikely that public opinion throughout the West Midlands was entirely unsupportive. It was widely known that Ansells had suffered a large fall in their mid-term profits, which they were looking to recover by reducing their huge operational costs. Their employees were reputed to earn the highest wages in the industry. It might therefore have seemed reasonable to expect some sort of sacrifice on their part.

However, the workers failed to see why they should be held responsible for the Company's poor economic performance and, on January 13th, 1981, the four-day week became the central issue in an all-out strike. With the dispute only a few days old, Management dispensed with the idea of the shortened working week, but stipulated that any return to work was conditional upon the acceptance of revised working practices

aimed at reducing costs.

Decidedly unimpressed by this alternative proposal, the strikers voted to continue their stoppage, at which point Management delivered an ultimatum that, unless the employees returned to work under the new terms and conditions of employment, they would all be sacked and the brewery closed for good. When this and subsequent warnings were ignored, Ansells carried out their threat by closing down the brewery and two distribution depots at nearby Aldridge and Gravelly Park.

For several months afterwards, a large-scale picketing operation was carried out, initially on the brewery itself, and then on pubs and clubs in the Midlands area. At length, other major breweries belonging to Allied-Lyons were also picketed as the strikers tried to enforce a return to work on pre-strike conditions of employment. This action proved largely unsuccessful: the distribution depots were subsequently re-opened but the brewery remained closed, apparently for good.

## 2. A Comparison of Accounts.

Local newspaper editorials were unanimous in their condemnation of the strike. The Sandwell Express and Star pointed out that, "Exasperated and tired of repeating its warnings, the Company was driven to closure." The strikers, it maintained, had "destroyed their own jobs." (February 10th, 1981). Meanwhile, the Birmingham Post colorfully described the workers' behaviour as "an unedifying example of playing a dangerous industrial version of 'chicken'"; adding that, "Unhappily, in the present economic climate which is totally uncongenial to such luxury sports, the losers go straight to the dole queue." (February 10th, 1981).

In a later editorial, "The Post" offered what it saw as the most

satisfactory explanation of the strike: ~~See Division 15~~

"Unfortunately, one of the more obvious manifestations of trade unionism is a fashion for instant defiance which too often brings with it hasty and ill-judged action. In fact, the whole dispute turns around hastiness. The entire region knew that the Aston Cross brewery was in danger of closure unless costs could be controlled." (March 19th, 1981).

Local public opinion also appeared antithetical to the strike. For long periods of the dispute, the Ansell workers believed that the public was unfairly set against them. This view was partly based on the unreliable evidence of "letters pages" in the local press which were invariably critical of the strike; and partly on the personal experience of the Ansell workers who often complained of "hostility" in their dealings with local people.\*

A possible reason for this attitude was outlined in the Sandwell Express and Star (February 10th, 1981) where it was suggested that:

"To workers in other industries it will seem that the Ansell men have little to complain about. The average wage at the brewery has been £175 a week, and although the new working practices that the brewery have tried to introduce would have cost the men between £20 and £30 a week, this would still have left them with an average wage of £148 a week, which by most industrial standards is a very healthy wage."

However, whilst many "outsiders" may have taken the view that the strike was illogical and self-destructive, the Ansell workers possessed a compelling rationale for their opposition to the Company. They looked upon the implementation of the four-day week as unprincipled and unnecessary, and, once threatened by the ultimatum, they were convinced that they had fallen victim to a fiendishly-contrived "set-up" aimed at reducing jobs.

Once mobilized, the confrontation soon became defined by the workforce as the first, and most crucial, battle in a campaign by

(\*See also Appendix II(ii)).

Allied Breweries (U.K.) (Allied-Lyons' beer division) to emasculate organized trade unionism throughout their enterprise. In this context, the threat of closure was denounced as a transparent coercive device, designed to bludgeon the workers into submission. Given the presumed nature of the Company's objectives, the Ansell strikers felt certain that they would receive the wholehearted support of their union (the Transport and General Workers' Union). However, the apparent diffidence displayed by Britain's largest trade union caused a disintegration of the strike effort and provoked accusations of betrayal by the disillusioned brewery men.

### 3. An Outline of the Present Approach.

Though naturalistic case studies of strikes are quite commonplace, the majority have tended to be treated descriptively rather than analytically. (Hartley et al., 1983:p11). Consequently, if we consider Hiller's (1969) classic distinction in terms of the three major phases of strike development (i.e., mobilization and preparation; maintenance and de-mobilization), only the first-mentioned has received close academic scrutiny. (Batstone et al., 1978). The present study seeks to remedy this deficiency by analysing, in turn, the decision to strike, the maintenance of the dispute and, finally, its termination.

We commence our analysis from the theoretical standpoint that strikes are best understood in terms of the psychological imagery and beliefs through which people interpret their current situations. Fundamental to this approach is the idea that strikes do not occur in temporal isolation; rather, they occupy the end-point in a unique historical progression of events. It is the subjective interpretation of such events that exerts so powerful an influence in shaping the



contemporary images, beliefs, perceptions and values (i.e., the cognitions) underlying collective behaviour. (Friedman and Meredeen, 1980).

By "psychological images" we refer to impressionistic ideas which interpret Management's behaviour as malevolent and/or exploitative; anticipate the future consequences of striking or not going on strike; and provide mental rehearsals regarding the probable outcome of the chosen course of action. The foundation for such images is provided by a variety of cognitive inferential processes, the nature and significance of which will be duly explored with reference to the extensive bodies of literature dealing with human inferential mechanisms (Abelson, 1976; Kinder and Weiss, 1978; Nisbett and Ross, 1980) and military strategic decision-making. (Jervis, 1976; May, 1973; Snyder and Diesing, 1977).

Not to be discounted, here, is the role of social influence and the discussion and exchange of ideas. This is the crucial process by which the beliefs and visions of perhaps a small number of men are internalised by scores - sometimes hundreds - of their peers, becoming a powerful inspiration for action.

To understand this process demands some insight into the dynamics of formal and informal communication systems and the techniques of persuasion and "impression management". (Hall, 1972; McGuire, 1969; Pettigrew, 1973; 1977; Weick, 1979). A lead is taken from the seminal work by Batstone et al. (op.cit.) on the shop floor organization of strikes (although, to repeat our earlier point, the present study is more avowedly concerned with cognitive thought processes and their points of origin in the "subjective history" of the social system).

Many of the processes so far described will be seen to apply not only to the decision to go on strike, but also the maintenance and, conversely, the termination of the dispute. We shall be concerned, in

these latter respects, with the perceptual processes by which consensual beliefs and definitions are buttressed and reinforced (Taylor and Crocker, 1980); and, paradoxically, with the ways in which they are finally broken down, having a depletive effect in terms of commitment to the strike.

One first-hand observer of a strike was surprised to discover that "an industrial dispute is not an abstraction of numbers and masses, but something that goes on, vividly and furiously, inside the heads and hearts of everybody caught up in it, my own included." (Jacobs, 1980:p x). The present study is based on the view that only by examining this experiential component underlying strike action can one ever hope to do full justice to a complicated social phenomenon.

#### 4. The Organization of the Thesis.

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Chapter One contains a critique of existing psychological explanations of strikes and the setting out of an alternative (i.e., social-cognitive) approach to the subject. Chapters Two to Five inclusive describe the historical and contemporary backgrounds to the Ansell's strike. This descriptive element of the study serves two important functions: first, to show how the dispute occurred, not in historical isolation, but as part of a social-evolutionary process spanning the lifetime of the company; and second, to provide a historical basis for understanding the cognitive processes underlying the Ansell's workers' behaviour.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight draw from this narrative to analyse, in turn, the initiation (i.e., decision-making), maintenance and de-mobilization phases of the strike. Each stage of analysis is based on specific elements of the social-cognitive approach outlined in

## Chapter One.

The main conclusions are set out in Chapter Nine. We also note the implications of the Ansell's strike for future industrial relations practice. Here, we depart from tradition by offering advice that is hopefully of utility to both sides of industry and not, as is more usually the case, to the sole benefit of management. (Hartley, 1983; Kornhauser, 1961). Finally, we suggest several possible avenues for future academic research.

### 5. The Method of Study.

Psychologists are increasingly inclined to blame an over-preoccupation with "scientific respectability" for retarding their theoretical contribution to industrial relations research. (Walker, 1979; Williams and Guest, 1969). According to this viewpoint, a prior obsession with such criteria as "rigour", "replicability" and "nicety of design" has been largely responsible for their lack of impact. The strict, highly quantified approach commonly prescribed has effectively forbidden the study of the strike for what it is: a dynamic social phenomenon reverberating with the busy traffic of ideas. Little wonder that some psychologists are more amenable to the notion that qualitative methodologies should be added to their repertoire. (Strauss, 1979).

With this in mind, it was determined that a participant observation approach was best suited to this study. A detailed description of the methodology is given in Appendix I. Briefly, it comprised<sup>3</sup> of: close personal involvement in the key areas of activity (i.e., mass meetings, picketing, etc.), interviews with a wide cross-section of the participants and the collection of all media and documentary evidence.

A wide range of research instruments was considered for use

(e.g., Kelly, 1955; Osgood et al., 1957; Stephenson, 1955), but rejected on the grounds that they might provide the subjects with "artificial categories" through which to relate their experience. (Armistead, 1974). A laboratory study was similarly avoided because of the problems involved in placing naive subjects into a sanitized environment devoid of the public pressures usually associated with industrial action. (Shapira and Bass, 1975).

Two industrial psychologists, Nicholson and Wall, are adamant that "there is a growing dissatisfaction among psychologists with life in the ivory tower, and a desire for greater social relevance in their work." (1976:p25). This study was inspired by the certain knowledge that bold words must be translated into bold deeds if psychologists are to make a meaningful contribution in the study of industrial relations. (Butler, 1979).

#### 6. Major Individuals and Organizations Involved in the Ansell's Strike.

Table 1 provides a concise summary of the major individuals and organizations involved in the Ansell's strike. This is not intended as an exhaustive list of participants. Its main function will be to remind the reader, where necessary, of the precise identity of the people and groups that took part in the strike.

Table 1. Key Individuals and Organizations Involved in the Strike.

(a) Organizations

Allied Breweries (U.K.).	Beer Division of multi-national Allied-Lyons group.
Ansells Brewery Limited.	Birmingham-based constituent company of Allied Breweries (U.K.).
The T.G.W.U..	The Transport and General Workers' Union.
The 5/377 Branch of the T.G.W.U..	The Ansells trade union branch (a pre-entry closed shop).
A.C.A.S.	The Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

(b) Individuals

(i) For the Company:

Sir Derrick Holden-Brown.	Vice-chairman, Allied-Lyons.
Robin Thompson.	Chairman/Managing Director, Ansells Brewery Limited.

(ii) For the Trade Union:

Alex Kitson.	Assistant General Secretary, T.G.W.U..
Brian Mathers.	Regional Secretary, T.G.W.U..
Douglas Fairbairn.	Divisional Secretary, T.G.W.U..
Terry Austin.	District Secretary, T.G.W.U..
Ken Bradley.	Branch Chairman, 5/377 Branch, T.G.W.U..
Matt Folarin.	Vice-chairman, 5/377 Branch, T.G.W.U..
Joe Bond.	Branch Secretary, 5/377 Branch, T.G.W.U..

## CHAPTER ONE. A SOCIAL-COGNITIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF STRIKES.

The contribution by psychologists to our understanding of strikes has not been very distinguished. (Bain and Clegg, 1974). Historically, they have chosen to concentrate on the more mundane aspects of industrial life, such as the selection, training and motivation of employees (Warr, 1980), though notable exceptions are provided by Hartmann and Newcomb(1940), Stagner(1956) and Stagner and Rosen(1965); and, more recently, by Hartley, et al.(1983), Kelly and Nicholson(1980) and Nicholson and Kelly(1980).

Existing psychological explanations of strike causality tend to fall into five main categories, namely: individual difference theories, innate need hypotheses, psychoanalytic approaches, the frustration-aggression hypothesis and the human relations approach. Accordingly, industrial conflict is seen as arising from motivational processes operating inside the individual or factors related to his personality. A final perspective posits that such conflict is a pathological consequence of poor interpersonal relations between the principal actors (notably, representatives of labour and management). These approaches are summarised in Table 1.1..

In this chapter, we dwell on the conceptual shortcomings of such theories. We emphasise how it is their neglect of important considerations as: the conflicting economic interests between labour and management, the social-historical background to the dispute, the social interaction between the participants involved and, above all, the meaning that they ascribe to their own actions, which renders them theoretically inadequate. This will pave the way for the presentation of an alternative social-cognitive framework for the analysis of strikes that deals more sensitively with these specific areas of neglect and which forms a basis for the understanding of the Ansells dispute.

Table 1.1. A Summary of Major Psychological Approaches to the Study of Strikes.

1. <u>Type of Approach.</u>	2. <u>Basis of Explanation.</u>	3. <u>Major Theoretical Inadequacies.</u>
(a) Individual difference theories.	Worker predisposed to strike due to "nature" as individual.	(i) Unable to explain concerted mass action; (ii) lacks empirical support.
(b) Innate-needs hypotheses.	Work = dissatisfying; employee "adjusts" by withdrawing from job (i.e., striking).	(i) Evidence contradicts presumed relationship between job dissatisfaction and strikes.
(c) Psychoanalytic theories.	Strike action constitutes reenactment of parent-infant emotional entanglement, or "mechanism of inferiority compensation."	(i) Lacks empirical support; (ii) fails to account for variations in strike propensity.
(d) Frustration-aggression hypothesis.	Goals of individual workers are blocked; causes aggression - leads to strike.	(i) Fails to specify how targets selected; (ii) aggression not always consequence of frustration.
(e) Human-relations theories.	Strike caused by deficiency or "pathology" in interpersonal relations between representatives of both sides.	(i) Neglects economic differences of interest between workers and management.

4. A General Critique of Psychological Approaches.

- (a) Strikes unfairly portrayed as pathological/impulsive/irrational (implies that such action is unreasoned and meaningless).
- (b) General neglect of social and historical context.
- (c) Ignore conflict of interests between workers and management.
- (d) Fail to specify how cohesion of individuals occurs (no consideration of communication, persuasion, etc.).

## 1.1. Some Criticisms of Specific Approaches.

### (a) Individual difference theories.

Individual difference theories are still used to account for variations in social behaviour. However, there is no good evidence to suggest that such differences have any bearing on the propensity to strike. (Brotherton and Stephenson, 1975; Clack, 1967; Snarr, 1975). The limitations of this type of approach become obvious if one considers that, "When the British coal miners struck in the winter of 1974, literally thousands of men behaved in a relatively similar fashion despite the fact that any individual difference variables in a population as large as this must surely have been normally distributed." (Brown and Turner, 1980:p11).

### (b) Innate needs hypotheses.

Innate needs hypotheses commonly hold that if an employee works at a job which restricts the fulfilment of certain intrinsic needs (thereby preventing him from achieving job satisfaction), he will make "adjustments" to his situation, such as going absent from work, leaving the company or engaging in industrial action. (e.g., Argyris, 1964). This view is often extended to postulate that "job satisfaction is the 'actual' or the 'real' cause underlying surface grievances over wages and conditions, the latter being seen therefore as the displaced objects of the former." (Kelly and Nicholson, 1980:p865).

Nevertheless, most research in this area has failed to establish a causal link between job dissatisfaction and these various forms on adaptive response. (Nicholson, et al., 1976; Thompson and Borglum, 1976). Indeed, Child(1969:p171) identifies many instances where "apparently high employee satisfaction...accompanied output restriction and various unofficial practices in defiance of formal management rules."



(c) Psychoanalytic approaches.

The application of Freudian and Adlerian psychoanalytic theory to strikes has been attempted by Morris (1959). Two Freudian explanations are considered. According to the first, strikes are the legacy of an early-infantile trauma where the partial resolution of the Oedipus Complex leaves adult workers with a guilt-ridden tendency to become devoted to substitute father figures, such as trade union leaders. Group solidarity emerges when a number of individuals adopt a common paternal substitute. However, an ambivalent (or, "love-hate") relationship exists between each individual and their leader, and there is a danger that the occasional hostility felt towards him will lead to the disunity of the group. To offset this, all feelings of hatred are displaced onto objects outside of the group (in this case, management), hence the potential for industrial conflict.

An alternative Freudian explanation sees a connection between strike action and a specific prehistoric ritual in which the younger elements of the "primal horde" rebelled against a despotic father figure and broke his monopoly of the womenfolk, firstly by killing him and then by eating his corpse in a huge commemorative meal. It is postulated that the memory of this event is preserved in the psyche of the species and passed down the generations in the form of an "archaic heritage". Hence, by this process the primal ritual is symbolically enacted whenever ostensibly similar situations arise; as during strike action which is considered analogous to the rebellion against the father by his sons.

Numerous theoretical objections may be levelled against these types of explanation (c.f., Billig, 1976; Tajfel, 1978). Basically, however, it is what Tajfel refers to as their "uncompromising stance of inevitability" (i.e., the assertion that the psycho-sexual mechanisms underlying intergroup relations are said to proceed inexorably, whatever

the social context) which renders such explanations most inadmissible.

According to this perspective, social conflict becomes, as Tajfel puts it, "a drama which is all set and played out before the actors ever enter the scene." (p408). In relating this to strikes, it is apparent that the Freudian rationale fails to account for the well-recognised inter-industrial (Kerr and Siegel, 1954) and international (Ross and Hartmann, 1961) variations in the propensity to strike, as well as the fact that many employees never engage in industrial action. (Smith et al., 1978).

The Adlerian interpretation of the strike sees it as "a mechanism of inferiority compensation. It is an economic weapon utilized by labour to compensate for its economic and social inferiority." (Morris, op.cit.:p843). Arguably, this improves on the Freudian approach to the extent that it is independent of any mysterious and highly dubious psycho-sexual basis of explanation, preferring the more tangible notion of "inferiority" as the causal mechanism. However, the assertion that strikes result from a sense of social inadequacy is highly questionable. Surely it is more plausible to assume that the socio-economic position of the worker gives rise to powerful sensations of injustice and deprivation (Runciman, 1966), rather than inferiority, as the theory suggests.

(d) The frustration-aggression hypothesis.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939) remains faithful to the Freudian tradition of describing intergroup conflict in terms of the motivational states of separate individuals. The hypothesis is based on the idea that, whenever the goals of individual workers are blocked, the resulting frustration that occurs is translated into aggressive behaviour towards management. Several industrial and organizational psychologists believe that this

formulation is best applied in the study of "wildcat" strikes whose rather "explosive" style of occurrence earmark them as spontaneous reactions by frustrated individuals. (Shimmin and Singh, 1972; Strauss, 1979; Williams and Guest, 1969).

However, the hypothesis is fraught with conceptual difficulties, such as its failure to specify how the targets of aggression are selected. (Skinner, 1979). Whilst most strike action is taken against management (Batstone et al., 1978), this is not always the case (consider, for example, a demarcation dispute involving rival unions). The model also mistakenly assumes that aggression is always a consequence of frustration, whereas experiments show that it is often used instrumentally - i.e., as a calculated means to an end. (Bandura and Walters, 1963). Finally, there are numerous social restraints which can prohibit the use of aggression, such as its perceived legitimacy in a given social setting. (Tajfel, op.cit.).

(e) The human relations approach.

The final theoretical perspective to be considered here, the human relations approach, posits that labour-management disputes are a consequence of poor interpersonal relations between the representatives of either side. (Fox, 1971; Nightingale, 1976). Symptoms of this supposed "pathology" are a lack of openness, a failure to appreciate problems from the opposition's point of view and an inability (or unwillingness) to effectively communicate one's own position. (Blake et al., 1964).

However, as Strauss points out, the human relations approach is fundamentally naive, not least because "In context it is clear that the authors view the 'causes' of the conflict as interpersonal rather than economic. In other words, economic differences are caused by poor interpersonal relations rather than the reverse." (1979:p384).

Similar criticisms have been levelled at the type of studies where psychologists have been called in as consultants during industrial disputes involving employee resistance to change. (Coch and French, 1953; Muensch, 1960). The basis of this criticism has been that, whilst psychologists seem content to analyse the situation in terms of the classic human relations approach (e.g., "defective communications"), they are more reluctant to consider that such resistance "might be legitimate, that its roots might be in the objective situation and that perhaps it is a real necessity for those who resist." (Moscovici, 1972:p28).

#### 1.2. A General Critique of Psychological Approaches.

A brief reconsideration of the above approaches would show that this tendency to avoid studying industrial conflict from a perspective of conflicting interests between workers and management appears to be the norm. A general value position is adopted that sees the goals of each side as compatible. (Hartley, 1983).

It also emerges from our discussion that conflict is typically viewed as "impulsive" or "irrational", the implication being that strikes are an unreasoned and essentially meaningless form of social behaviour. Such impressions hold true only if one disregards both the social-historical <sup>background?</sup> to the dispute and the thinking, planning and organization that is a prerequisite of industrial action. (Batstone et al., 1978).

Whilst some strikes may appear spontaneous and unpremeditated, having been sparked off by a relatively "trivial" incident, often one need only look into their recent historical background to appreciate that serious underlying issues are involved. (Paterson and Willett, 1951; Stagner, 1950). Watson(1980) describes a strike that was ostensibly caused by management's decision to prohibit the brewing of tea on the

shop floor. However, as the author points out, this problem arose in the wake of an earlier decision to transfer 1,000 employees to another workplace without first bothering to consult them, and it is inconceivable that this matter was unrelated to the strike. One can usefully distinguish, therefore, between the trigger, issues and demands involved in any single strike. (Kelly and Nicholson, 1980).

Another serious shortcoming of most psychological approaches is their failure to recognise that industrial action results, not from the aggregated responses of separate individuals, but from the concerted effort of an integrated social unit. Kelsall(1958:p11) makes the point that:

"Psychological explanations of industrial conflict deriving from the nature of individuals have to face their first serious problems in the fact that strikes are mass actions and cohesion of individuals must occur before strikes are possible."

It is also true to say that industrial action involves aspects of planning and deciding. For example, workers will hesitate to engage in a stoppage if they consider that there are other, more effective means of resolving an issue (e.g., via the appropriate grievance machinery), or if they imagine that a strike stands little chance of success. (Batstone et al., op.cit.). This notwithstanding, there may be occasions when the sense of grievance is so acute as to outweigh the prospect of failure. (Hyman, 1972).

A complete understanding of strikes must therefore take into account the fact that they are socially and cognitively mediated forms of industrial behaviour: "cognitive" to the extent that they involve elements of interpretation and strategic decision-making (all aspects of which will be influenced by prior experience and existing perceptual sets); and "social" to the degree that processes of leadership, communication help to determine whether they occur and how long they last. (Fantasia, 1983; Scott and Homans, 1947).

Recently, an important lead has been taken in this area by Kelly and Nicholson(1980) who have adapted the approaches of Kelsall(1958) and Smelser(1962) into an "Integrated Model of Strike Causation and Process." However, whilst these authors are correct to note the importance of such variables as "intergroup perceptions", "frames of reference" and the "industrial relations climate", in practice these concepts have proved vague and difficult to analyse. (Hartley et al., 1983:p188). As we shall now see, the present approach deals more specifically with similar psychological variables to demonstrate how strike action is a calculated response to a socially determined and socially shared cognitive representation of reality.

### 1.3. A Social-cognitive Approach (I): The Decision to Strike.

We have already established that strikes do not simply "explode" into life; "spontaneous combustion" is a theory more suited to mindless machines than consciously-acting human-beings. Some degree of unity and cohesion among the participants is a prerequisite for industrial action: in short, preliminary organization along the cognitive dimension.

The mobilization of strike action requires the establishment of a socially manufactured consensual definition of the situation which posits: (a) that the workers have a justifiable reason for going on strike; and (b) that there is a good case for supposing that strike action is likely to be an effective or, at the very least, an appropriate form of response. Thus, the prelude to a strike involves a period of intra-group debate, however tacit or superficial, followed by an agreed undertaking to pursue this particular mode of action.

One important corollary to the above is that total agreement is both an unlikely and an unnecessary precondition for the occurrence of industrial action. A group of workers may go on strike for a variety of

different reasons: "Partners in a collective structure share space, time and energy, but they need not share visions. That sharing comes much later if it ever comes at all." (Weick, 1979:p91). This point is amply demonstrated with regard to the small strike (or "downer") described by Clack(1967:p56) where "It was clear that not everybody knew or was agreed upon the causes of the strike."

This may be far more typical of strikes resulting from quick decisions where there has been little advance deliberation. However, even here, some alignment of perspectives is necessary if individuals are not to react idiosyncratically and without regard to the behaviour of their colleagues. Experiments on collective decision-making demonstrate that, "since different aspects of the problem are salient for different individuals, agreement can only be reached after a re-definition of the situation. One aspect or a small number of aspects must become dominant for all the subjects and override the various considerations influencing individual responses in different directions. The group therefore has to achieve a real cognitive organization..." (Doise, 1976:p71, emphasis added).

It follows from the above that any satisfactory account of how strikes occur must show how the competing tendencies of separate individuals or coalitions are reconciled into the acceptance of a single conceptual theme (a dominant image) recommending strike action. The following section emphasises the role of social communication and influence in the production of this effect.

(a) The role of social influence.

Current explanations of group decision-making emphasise the part played by informational and normative influence. (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955).

"The former involves the dissemination of knowledge among group members regarding an issue over which they differ. Faced with a collective choice, members inform each other about the collective merits of their respective position. Information which was initially only partially shared therefore becomes available to all. Consensus is achieved when the shared knowledge is persuasive, when it is sufficient to demonstrate the superiority of one particular course of action. In contrast, normative processes describe the impact of rewards and punishments, actual or anticipated. When a person values his membership within a group and finds his position on an important issue differs from that of other members, he is likely to experience a variety of distressful emotions - fear of disapproval, of being shamed, of loss of self-esteem, etc..... The person will then ostensibly abandon his position and shift toward the consensus in order to reduce such threats." (Burnstein and Vinokur, 1973:pp123-24).

In fact, Burnstein and Vinokur argue, vigorously, for an explanation of group decision-making exclusively in terms of informational influence, taking the line that the notion of normative influence is superfluous. (Burnstein and Vinokur, 1975; 1977; Vinokur and Burnstein, 1978). They maintain that shifts in individual preference are due, solely, to the sharing of persuasive arguments. Any experimental effects nominally resulting from normative influence are comfortably explained, in their view, by the process of ideation where individuals note the discrepancy between their own and other points of view and generate possible reasons why an alternative is preferred. The more they "mull over" such reasons, the more they become convinced by them.

However, a more popular theoretical viewpoint asserts that, although the concept of ideation is important, actors are still subjected to normative as well as informational influence, although it is agreed that the latter has by far the larger effect. (Fraser, 1978; Myers et al., 1974; Myers and Lamm, 1976; Steiner, 1982).

One important qualification to the above is that not all items of information are equally effective in inducing shifts in preference. A genuinely persuasive argument is one which, in Vinokur and Burnstein's terminology, is both valid and novel:



"This conceptualization of validity refers to conditions peculiar to the person who is the target of the communication; thus, validity refers to the extent to which the argument is accepted as true and plausible, and novelty refers to the extent to which the argument contains new ideas not previously known to the particular person." (1978:p337).

Information is therefore maximally persuasive when it meets the twin criteria of being both novel and valid. Clearly, whether or not information is accepted as valid is an entirely subjective affair. As Vinokur and Burnstein explain, "what matters is not whether an argument in fact is valid - objective criteria for judging validity often do not exist - but whether it is perceived as such." (ibid:p346).

Taking Vinokur and Burnstein's "persuasive arguments theory" as a reasonable description of the process of social decision-making, we therefore adopt the position that strike action occurs when separate individuals present to their colleagues a justifiable and acceptable argument for engaging in concerted industrial action.

Initially, such individuals will use their own cognitive inferential abilities to construct theories of situations and events and speculate as to the consequences of future actions. They will then use such theories as the basis of arguments for (or against) a strike, which, depending on their novelty and validity, may persuade their fellow workers to choose a similar line of action.

There is scope within such a framework to accept that, even where individuals are not persuaded of the legitimacy or appropriateness of strike action, they may nonetheless comply, due to the effects of normative influence. Neither is it assumed that the actors concerned will be wholeheartedly persuaded by the arguments they hear: the consensual definition which emerges is a working definition that may constantly be subjected to doubt.

(b) Cognitive inferential processes.

Situations differ according to the amount of inferential judgement required to understand them. Batstone et al. (1978:ch 4) enumerate the various reasons put forward for going on strike by workers at the vehicle manufacturing plant they studied. At one level, arguments in favour of strike action were based on definitions of the situation requiring little subjective interpretation (e.g., the breaking of an agreement or the narrowing of a pay differential). However, at an entirely different level, such arguments were often based on assertions that management were engaging in an attempt to "con" or exploit the workforce.

One example of the latter concerned the accusation that management were deliberately operating under the cloak of a government incomes policy to introduce a controversial work-payment system (Measured Day Work) as inexpensively as possible. Hence the popular definition that: "Management are trying to get M.D.W. on the cheap. The bloody cheek!" (ibid:p184). Here, we are entering the realms of conjecture and hypothesis regarding management's motives and intentions. Some idea of how these inferential judgements are arrived at (not only in defining the situation as one which warrants strike action, but also in assessing whether such action is likely to be effective) is central to our understanding of the Ansell's dispute. Consequently, we now focus on two important cognitive processes involving the use of "plans" and "scripts" as the basis of persuasive arguments.

(i) "Plans" as the basis of persuasive arguments. The first conceptual position taken is that understanding someone's behaviour involves recognising their acts as part of a "plan" to achieve a specific goal or objective. (Schank and Abelson, 1977). For example, if employees know, on the basis of press statements or even rumour or hearsay, that

the company is eager to make economic rationalizations, perhaps by closing down one of its factories, then the withdrawal of a major investment programme or the sale of plant and machinery may be interpreted as part of a plan to achieve this objective.

Even in the absence of any known objectives on the part of management, employees may infer from the context of the act (e.g., a drastic decline in market demand) that such a sale of plant and equipment is part of a plan to close down a factory.

The perceived validity of persuasive arguments resting on designed inferences of this nature is likely to be related to known information about management's objectives. Pruitt(1965:p404) makes the point that "the more that is known about the motives underlying an action, the smaller the likelihood of misinterpretation." Thus, in terms of the above example, should documents exist to show that management are selling off plant with a view to having it replaced, an argument that a closure was being planned would not be accepted as valid. The role of company "feedback" might also be crucial, here: where the appropriate spokesmen act quickly to deny the existence of a closure plan the argument is likely to be invalidated. A "discrete silence", on the other hand, is liable to increase the perceived validity of the original conjecture.

A complementary process to plan understanding is that of plan creation (Schank and Abelson, op.cit.:pp72-73) where, given a goal to achieve, actors "must string methods together in an admissible or optimal way to realise (it)." In practical terms, employees will devise their plan according to such considerations as management's known capacity to resist a strike based on existing stock levels (Hyman, 1972), or the strength of a shop steward's "bargaining relationship" with members of management. (Brown, 1973). Depending on the condition of the latter, employees might think it preferable to try for an "informal" resolution of the dispute without resorting to strike action.

A variety of subsidiary inferences, ranging from the predicted levels of sympathetic support to the implications of strike action for relationships with other parties, are likely to impinge on the planning process. Ajzen(1977:p304) stresses that, "When asked to make a prediction, people look for factors that would cause the behaviour or event under consideration. Information that provides evidence concerning the presence or absence of such causal factors is therefore likely to influence predictions."

Thus, workers who require some idea as to whether a second group of employees will offer sympathetic support, will look for the presence of such antecedent causal conditions as: the fact that the second group have recently been in dispute and would not immediately relish another strike; that they have been told by their employer that any future loss of production would inevitably lead to redundancies; or that they have a reputation for being "militant". Clearly, the extent to which sources can demonstrate the presence or absence of such antecedents to their colleagues will profoundly affect the choice of action.

Equally important items of consideration are the perceived consequences, both positive and negative, resulting from a potential course of action.(Steinbruner, 1974). Thus, workers may be influenced by arguments not to go on strike since this might upset existing goodwill between themselves and the employer, that it might endanger their unity with other workgroups or that it might cause them to endure unnecessary hardships. (Batstone et al., op.cit.). Alternatively, they might be persuaded by arguments that management would interpret any reluctance to go on strike as a "sign of weakness" to be exploited on future occasions (Edwards and Scullion, 1982:p59; Whyte, 1951:p42 and p68); or that to threaten to go on strike without actually going through with it would undermine their future credibility as a bargaining unit. (Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981:p290).

(ii) "Scripts" as the basis of persuasive arguments. It is true to say, however, that in their everyday attempts to understand novel situations and plan their responses, individuals and groups seldom proceed without an information base. Instead, they "look around for an already learned definition of the situation to apply to the new reality." (Silverman, 1970:p139). The process of interpretation and response begins, as Schutz puts it, with the "referral of the unknown to the known." (1967:p34). The application of cognitive scripts (Abelson, 1976; Schank and Abelson, op.cit.) helps to fulfil this function. As we shall see, scripts tend to complement plans as a basis for understanding events and formulating strategy.

In simple terms, scripts are conceptual structures comprised of an interlocking series of "event chains" (scenes or vignettes) defining how well-known situations are likely to proceed.

"By 'script' I mean a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer. Scripts are learned throughout the individual's lifetime, both by participation in event sequences and by observation of event sequences (I am using 'observation' in a very broad sense here to include vicarious observation of events about which one reads). Because individuals have different histories, they may learn some different scripts, although many scripts are culturally so overlearned that they are virtually universal." (Abelson, op.cit.:p33).

Elements of script theory have been used to explain well-known military decisions. It is said, for example, that the "Munich Conference" or "Appeasement" script (based on Chamberlain's policy towards Hitler prior to Britain's involvement in World War Two) has exerted a profound influence on military planners. The script consists of two vignettes: "'The Political Compromise', in which one yields to a power-hungry and unprincipled foe, and 'The Military Consequence', in which one's country or that of one's ally is subsequently overrun by the foe." (Nisbett and Ross, 1980:p39). America's intervention in

Vietnam and Britain's involvement at Suez were both based on the premise that the European experience might be repeated. (Jervis, 1976).

The obvious utility of cognitive scripts is that they lend immediate structure to otherwise ambiguous events, providing the cognizer with a ready basis for predicting future outcomes and what he must do to prevent them. References to the experience of other groups of workers as the basis of arguments in favour of strike action are commonplace in Batstone et al.'s "The Strike That Never Was."

Scripts are of value not only in predicting the likely future, but also in the selection of the most appropriate form of response. (Mangham, 1978). As Hiller puts it, "Preparation to strike is aided through imaginative rehearsals." (1969:p54). Plainly, the propensity of workers to go on strike will be governed, to some extent, by their previous record of success and failure. (Hyman, 1972:p130). It is important to bear in mind, however, that scripts are learned vicariously. Therefore, the success or failure of other groups of workers may be referred to as a guide. (Ward, 1973).

Scripts are not applied arbitrarily. Certain "qualification criteria", such as the representativeness (Kahnemann and Tversky, 1972), availability (Tversky and Kahnemann, 1973) and vividness (Nisbett and Ross, 1980) of a previous experience will determine whether it is chosen.

"Thus, an international crisis might be thought of as similar to some past event because of superficial similarities between the two situations or because that particular past event had recently taken place, had been personally experienced, or had for any other reason been particularly salient." (Gilovich, 1981:p802).

This is not to guarantee the infallibility or effectiveness of scripts as images of social reality. Often, the similarities between comparative situations are allowed to overshadow important differences between them; and previously successful policies are sometimes re-implemented without sufficient regard to contextual changes that may have occurred in the interim. (Jervis, 1976; May, 1973; Snyder and

Diesing, 1977). There is also a danger that situations may be too narrowly defined, reflecting a picture of the world that is too precise and oversimplified and, ultimately, misleading. (Kinder and Weiss, 1978).

We may, nonetheless, take it that script-based persuasive arguments possess high intrinsic validity. (Vinokur and Burnstein, 1978). They involve an established basis for supposing that events will proceed in a certain manner. Outcomes are more "imaginable", thus inspiring confidence. (Coates, 1981; Eccles, 1981). Other forms of inference are, presumably, only as believable as the information they are based upon.

Even so, the fact that a persuasive argument may or may not be inherently appealing is no guarantee of its influence. As we are about to see below, a host of social considerations, such as the skills and attributes of the source of the message, the means and opportunity of presentation, and the values and interests of the target population all have a bearing on the extent to which the argument is perceived as valid and novel and is, therefore, persuasive.

(c) The social context.

The social setting in which a strike occurs is not merely a product "of the present"; it represents a culmination of previous behaviours and events and contains implications for the future. To quote Kelsall(1958:p4), "the ghosts of past discontents remain as unconscious components of morale, attitudes, perceptions and motivation." We have seen, for example, how cognitive scripts are based on previous experiences, but the effects of the past are more widely felt than this.

The existing relations between management and employees, the workplace values and personal reputations that influence the way we

think and behave have their origins in the past. Other elements of the social context - such as the environmental stress under which important decisions are made - are more likely to be a product of the present, even though the source of that stress might be related to possible future outcomes.

(i) The nature of union-management relations. Very much a product of the past is the relationship between union and management, a central component of which is the extent to which they trust each other. (Purcell, 1979; Worchel, 1979). One group will distrust the other where experience has shown that they pose a threat to their interests or well-being. (Jervis, 1976:p44). A vicious circle may develop where the tendency to regard the outgroup as a threat leads to greater distrust which, in turn, leads to an even firmer conviction that the outgroup constitutes a threat. (Pruitt, 1965).

According to Purcell, the symptoms of distrust between union and management are quite unmistakable:

"It is typified in management by attempts to restrict the scope of bargaining; limit and distort information given to the union; and attempts to bypass the union in its dealings with employees, thus weakening union support and organization. If circumstances change, agreements made earlier may be ignored or broken. On the union side, distrust is typified by constant concern with the union organization and solidarity; frequent resort to threatened or actual industrial action; frequent raising of formal issues in the disputes procedure; willingness to ignore agreements if an opportunity arises; and to get 'one over' management whenever possible." (op.cit.:p10).

Whenever conditions like this prevail, fresh disputes are likely to sharpen existing stereotypes, re-emphasising the untrustworthiness of the opposition. Conflict situations provide the conditions, par excellence, in which "we"/"They" dichotomies arise (Brewer, 1979), and lay the foundations for extreme negative stereotyping (or "ethno-centrism") to occur. (Brown and Turner, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 1979).



Where, on the other hand, there is no history of conflict between workers and management, and trade union ideology is only weakly developed, a major confrontation will constitute something of an "education" for all those involved. (Lane and Roberts, 1971). Not least, they will derive a new way of looking at their opponents: as people they are no longer prepared to trust. (Sinha and Upadhyaya, 1960).

Enhanced perceptions of untrustworthiness are liable to have a profound influence on the extent to which arguments are persuasive. For example, assertions that management are behaving in an exploitative or malevolent fashion are more likely to be perceived as valid in an atmosphere of low trust. Equally, perceptions of management as untrustworthy will lend credence to the argument that any failure to strike will be exploited as a sign of weakness; or that the strike should be used as a weapon of first resort: being the "only language" that the company is prepared to listen to. (Goodman, 1967:p59).

(ii) The politics of the workplace. "Trustworthiness" (though this time in the context of interpersonal as opposed to intergroup relations) is also one of the most important qualities of the sender of a persuasive message (i.e., the "source") which render it likely that the argument he transmits will be accepted as valid. (Hovland et al., 1953). The affective relations between a source and his target are clearly important in this respect: if the target likes the source, he is more likely to trust him, especially if he is aware that the feeling is mutual. (Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981). Attraction between fellow group members is also likely to be important in terms of normative influence. Social actors are more likely to conform when they value the friendship and affection of their peers. (French and Raven, 1959).

The expertness of the source is another factor liable to have a bearing on the perceived validity of a persuasive communication.

(Hovland et al., op.cit.). A shop steward who is known for his wide knowledge and experience in trade union affairs will be highly influential, more so if he enjoys good bargaining relationships with members of management and is, therefore, presumed to have the benefit of "inside information". Closely connected, here, is the credibility of a source. This is linked to his reputation for being correct - i.e., it is a measure of the extent to which his predictions are corroborated by actual outcomes. (Tedeschi and Reiss, op.cit.).

Clearly, the opportunities for potential sources to present persuasive arguments may be unequally distributed. Control over the flow of information is particularly crucial in this respect. (Pettigrew, 1973; 1977). When individuals or groups occupy a "gatekeeping" role in any organization, they have the advantage of being able to disseminate their own arguments and to block or moderate counterattitudinal information. Similarly, by exercising "control over the agenda", certain actors can manipulate a variety of rules, procedures and standing orders to ensure that as much dissent as possible is prevented from reaching the decision-making arena. (Walsh et al., 1981).

People have differing skills and abilities in terms of being able to formulate and present a persuasive argument. The talent for defining a situation from a more novel and "suggestive" perspective than anyone else gives an individual enormous social leverage, particularly since other people may come to depend on him for their own interpretations. (Hosking and Morley, 1983). Indeed, it seems reasonable to suppose that the ability to form an association between current events and previous situations (i.e., to evoke cognitive scripts) is unequally distributed throughout the group.

This apart, the ability of the source to deliver his message in a form of language which not only excites the imagination but can also be easily comprehended by others (Pondy, 1978), and aspects of style,

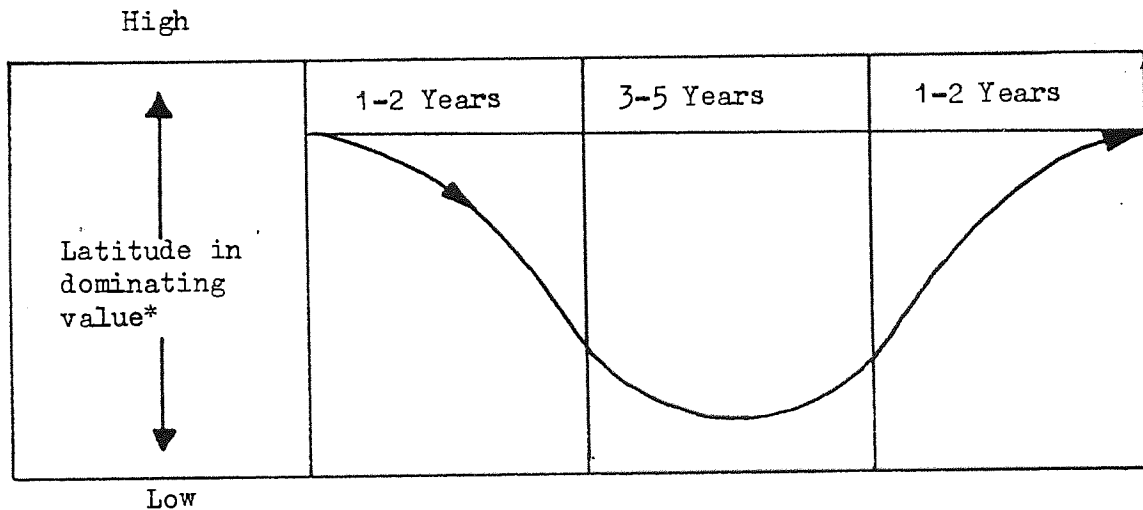
such as the confidence with which the argument is presented (McGuire, 1969), will have a bearing on (a) whether the argument is digested by the intended target, and (b) whether or not he perceives it as valid.

Another important skill concerns the ability of social actors to link a persuasive argument to the system of values operating within the workplace. (Partridge, 1978). Values represent standards of desired ends or preferences; they refer to "commitments to key sets of ideas which act as yardsticks or criteria for the operation of an organization." (Walsh et al., op.cit.:p137). At the workplace level, there may be strong values for unity among workers; justice, fairness and the prevention of exploitation; the improvement of wages and conditions; job protection; and the securing of greater worker autonomy and control. (Batstone et al., 1977: pp 27-28).

As Fox(1971:p128) points out, it is invariably at times of crisis or revolt that "temporary rebellious emotions" may be converted into permanent autonomous values. These values are subsequently referred to in order to justify opposition to management and become consolidated via success. (ibid). Indeed, if Peters(1978:pp 19-21) is correct, there occurs a 5 to 9-year cycle in the dominating values which guide organizational behaviour (see Fig.1). For the first year or two of the cycle when the value is becoming established, commitment to certain modes of behaviour will remain fairly lax. However, for the next 3 to 5 years of the cycle, commitment is more marked as the dominating value becomes "progressively less flexible over time." (ibid:p20).

A strong sharing of values may be predicted whenever a powerful sense of "community" exists within a workforce. (Allen, 1981). Clearly, however, the distribution of values among any given workgroup will vary, the precise extent of this variation having profound implications for the success of any one persuasive argument. (Partridge, op.cit.: p189).

Fig. 1. Peters' 5-9 Year Cycle of Strategic Transition.



\*The dominating value represents the end-product of consensus-building activity (or "value management") on the part of influential actors within the organization. However, "Just as it cannot be imposed by fiat, it cannot be changed at will. Typically, a major shift in the dominant belief can be brought about only when an important change is perceived to be at hand." (Peters, 1978: p20).

(Source: Peters, 1978: p21).

Evidence also suggests that, when faced with competing perspectives, actors incline towards the one which is connected to important values. (Steinbruner, 1974). Moreover, where there already exists a given value within the workgroup for a particular course of action, individuals may follow the bold example of their colleagues by pursuing it even though there is some uncertainty about the outcome. (Steiner, 1982).

Social actors are likely to attend to matters of material and political interest when sponsoring a particular definition of the situation. An argument in favour of a strike may be denied, discredited or suppressed if it is thought that industrial action will be detrimental either to the interests of the source or the constituency he represents. (Batstone et al., 1978). It should also be remembered that the greater the heterogeneity of the group in terms of experience, knowledge, values and interests, the wider and more diverse will be the range of possible interpretations. (Mangham, 1978:p63).

(iii) The decision-making climate. Finally, we should note the implications of the "decision-making climate" for the way that situations are defined and the appropriate responses selected. Cognitive theorists continue to emphasise that individuals prefer to nominate single explanations for events rather than having to cope with a number of equiprobable definitions. (Kanouse, 1971; Steinbruner, 1974). This proclivity is supposedly enhanced under conditions of crisis and complexity - e.g., when cherished values or interests are being threatened, or when the decision-makers are taken by surprise and have little time in which to formulate their response. (Morley, 1982).

#### 1.4. A Social-cognitive Approach (II): The Maintenance of the Strike.

Once formulated, the beliefs that we hold regarding the nature of people and events often display a remarkable resilience. (Jervis, 1976: p143). This is primarily because individuals tend to encode information in ways which confirm existing social definitions. May(1973:p xi) says of politicians and statesmen that:

"Once persuaded that the war of 1812, or World War I, or 'totalitarian aggression' is repeating itself, they may see only facts conforming to such an image."

The same argument also seems likely to apply to people who are on strike. Negative outgroup stereotypes are reinforced as information regarding social actors is made to fit their popular stereotype. Wood and Pedler saw how in one particular strike:

"A number of perceptual distortions reinforce each other and lead to a rigidifying of opposing positions, each believing that God and right are on his side, while the other is the repository of all that is bad. Conflict is thus escalated and the dispute prolonged." (1978:p36).

The precise ways in which cognitive processes of this type tend to operate are extensively reviewed elsewhere (e.g., Cooper and Fazio, 1979; Hamilton, 1976; 1979; Taylor and Crocker, 1980). A brief restatement of the salient points is sufficient for our purposes.

To begin with, it is evident that people tend to actively seek out information with the aim of confirming their prior theories and beliefs. (Snyder, 1980). Once discovered, even the most ambiguous data is exploited as "incontrovertible" evidence as to the accuracy of an image. (Duncan, 1976). By contrast, disconfirmatory evidence is often twisted to make it appear different. Thus, "A kind behaviour on the part of a 'hostile' person may be perceived as insincere, manipulative or condescending." (Jones and Nisbett, 1971:p90). Moreover, different standards of appraisal are used with regard to in- and outgroup beha-

viours. There is a propensity to explain negative behaviour on the part of outgroup members in terms of inherent dispositional qualities, but to excuse similar forms of ingroup behaviour in terms of mitigating environmental factors. (Ross, 1977; Taylor and Jaggi, 1974).

Images are further bolstered as individuals engage in retrospective sense-making as a way of reinforcing beliefs and removing lingering doubts. (Nisbett and Ross, 1980:p83). Kinder and Weiss(1978:p711) make the point that "people typically reappraise the alternatives following a decision, thinking more favourably of the chosen, while feeling less positively about the rejected alternatives."

A selective retrieval bias also operates in the sense that individuals remember only those aspects of their previous experience which validate existing impressions. (Howard and Rothbart, 1980). Furthermore, there is a tendency to reinterpret past events in such a way as to augment current definitions of reality. (Snyder and Urnowitz, 1978).

The reluctance of individuals to abandon their beliefs in the face of contradictory information should not be underestimated. Ross et al.(1977) provided their experimental subjects with several reasons to believe that an event had actually taken place. Some time later, the same subjects were told that they had been deliberately misled but this did nothing to discourage the belief that such an event was still likely to take place. The authors explain this effect by suggesting that the ability to identify the antecedent causal conditions that might lead to a certain outcome or event produces a kind of unwarranted subjective certainty that lies at the root of "post discrediting impression perseverance".

Of course, individuals do not exist within a social vacuum: they are apt to pass on their thoughts to others, hence the potential for the social reinforcement of theories and beliefs. (Steinbruner, 1974).

The importance of rumour will become evident at this point, with information being systematically embroidered as it travels via the transmission process. (Shibutani, 1966).

Meanwhile, depending on the extent to which they have access to scarce resources, certain actors may consciously manipulate the evidence to hand, making it appear consonant with the desired impression. Fearing that commitment on the part of the rank-and-file will not persist indefinitely, strike leaders often work assiduously to emphasise the merits of the dispute and the likelihood of success:

"Devices include strike bulletins, speeches and face-to-face communications. These stress the probability of goal achievement, the support coming from other unions, the power of unity, the alertness of the leaders to any oppositions and threats and the virtues of the union cause." (Stagner, 1956:p435).

Primarily, this involves insuring the maximum disclosure of favourable information and nullifying or limiting the impact of destructive information (Goffman, 1959) or dissension from within: "crises are offset by counter suggestion and closer coordination between the leaders and the strikers. Rumours are denied, official interpretation is supplied and information is broadcasted." (Hiller, op. cit.:p96).

The widespread application of a host of symbolic devices may also be involved. (Hall, 1972). The General Strike of 1926 offers countless examples of the clever use of language (e.g., irony and satire) to structure the cognitions of the trade union movement (Farman, 1974:p202); but the regular appearance of poetry, cartoons, posters, photographs and processions is likely to be as much a feature of any given strike. (Batstone et al., 1978; Lane and Roberts, 1971; Warner and Low, 1947).

Where prop<sup>o</sup>ganda of this type is ineffective, and peaceful persuasion fails to uphold commitment to the strike, various forms of normative or coercive pressure may be exerted, ranging from the use of



ridicule to physical threats and direct obstruction. (Hiller, op.cit.).

Finally, it should be pointed out that a number of forms of "environmental stress" are likely to contribute to the protraction of the dispute. (Hartley et al., 1983:p180). For example, where a decision-making group holds beliefs that are contrary to the norms of the larger population, or where they perceive themselves to be under attack by external forces, there develops "an extreme emphasis on cohesion-building or cohesion-maintaining behaviours". (Steiner, 1982:p519). This can range from the one-sided presentation of arguments to the self-censorship of doubt and the withholding of contradictory information. Each of these practices is designed to stifle criticism and doubt and may have the effect of needlessly prolonging the strike.

#### 1.5. A Social-cognitive Approach (III): The De-mobilization of the Strike.

Given the self-perpetuating nature of cognitive images, it is unlikely that the discrediting of initial impressions will speedily occur. (Jervis, op.cit.). A major re-evaluation of the situation is only liable to take place after a long process of attrition, or when a sudden influx of disconfirmatory information has a devastating impact on currently-held attitudes and beliefs. (Nisbett and Ross, op.cit.).

This latter process might feasibly involve: a loss of control over the flow of information, allowing an undesirable "leakage" of negative information; a loss of credibility on the part of the strike leaders (due, perhaps, to repeated discrepancies between predicted results and actual outcomes); or gradual shifts regarding the salience of workplace values and general conceptions of vested interest.

Assuming that some doubt emerges regarding the validity of prior interpretations and predictions of success, the speed with which the strike is foreclosed may crucially depend on how the union leaders

choose to intervene. Whereas a committed leadership might seek to prolong the strike by lowering objectives in line with the revised definition of reality, a less committed group of leaders might exploit any temporary lowering of morale by recommending an end to the dispute.

It should be emphasised, however, that any resulting transformation in the way the situation is defined is unlikely to be far-reaching. Steinbruner's "principle of stability" asserts that:

"...a major restructuring of beliefs is likely to set off a chain reaction, imposing severe burdens on the information-processing system. Economy thus requires a bias against change in major components of belief structure once they have been established." (1974:p102).

The revised view of reality is, therefore, likely to retain core elements of the interpretation that previously held sway. The common resort to "myth" (Edelman, 1971) and "scapegoating" (Janis and Mann, 1977) illustrates the steadfastness with which people cling to their central beliefs.

Of course, the decision to terminate a strike may be unrelated to any weakening of the initial beliefs. Increasing financial hardship might be sufficient to encourage a gradual return to work. This is why less committed strike leaders sometimes adopt a "passive" strategy of pretending to wholeheartedly support the strike whilst waiting for environmental factors to erode the membership's morale. (c.f. Ashenfelter and Johnson, 1969:p37; Kuhn, 1961:p306). This is often preferred to an "active" strategy of persuading the members by argument because it is less harmful in terms of political standing.

Clearly, however, trade union leaders sometimes call off strikes or achieve settlements with employers against the wishes of their members. This occurred during the General Strike of 1926 when an anticipated "backlash" on the part of the rank-and-file strikers pushed members of the T.U.C.'s General Council (the strike leaders)

into many of the forms of cohesion-building behaviour we have recently identified as synonymous with environmentally-induced stress. (c.f. Bullock, 1960:pp 329-41; Citrine, 1964:pp 195-201; Farman, 1974:pp 264-80; Phillips, 1976:pp 233-40). Consequently, the decision to terminate the strike was uncritically arrived at, and implemented without even a passing regard for the consequences. Little wonder, therefore, that the outcome was so disastrous for the trade union movement with thousands of workers being locked-out or victimised as they made their return to work. (Renshaw, 1975).

Finally, where commitment to the strike is due, in some part, to the exertion of strong normative influence, we may predict that any relaxation of that influence or, alternatively, any increase in the level of counter-normative behaviour (e.g., the breaking of picket lines) is likely to result in a reduced level of support. (Milgram, 1974).

#### 1.6. Summary.

This chapter has illustrated how the impetus for strike action is derived from the cognitive images used by employees to define their situation. These images are socially constructed, arising from processes of social interaction, leadership and persuasion (though ultimately they can be traced back to the cognitive inferential processing activities of individual group members). The greater the homogeneity of the workforce in terms of experience, values and interests, the lesser the risk of competing interpretations (and uncertainty and division) among the rank-and-file.

Once formulated, the types of definition underpinning the decision to go on strike tend to be self-reinforcing, having a pervasive effect on the way that subsequent information is encoded. A breakdown of these

definitions is only liable to occur following a sudden influx of  
damaging information, or after a long attritional process.

It has been established that the type of images, values  
and perceptions that are central to strike development have their  
origins in the past. Consequently, it is imperative that we commence  
our analysis of the Ansell's dispute by examining the prior history  
of the union-management relationship.

2.1. Ansell's Brewery Limited.

Ansell's Brewery Limited is one of the main constituent companies of the multi-national Allied Breweries (U.K.), the largest drinks group in Europe. Some indication of the Parent Company's size is that, in 1980, it brewed one seventh of the United Kingdom's beer and owned 10% of the nation's public houses. In terms of beer production, "Allied" are responsible for such popular brands as Skol Lager, Arctic Lite, Double Diamond and Long Life, all of which are manufactured at one or another of the Company's large breweries in Alloa, Wrexham, Leeds, Warrington, Burton-on-Trent, Oxford and Romford.

However, beer production is not Allied's sole concern. Constant diversification has enabled them to establish firm footholds in the wine and spirits trade (Baby Cham, Teachers Whiskey, Warninks Advocaat, Cockburns Port and Harveys Bristol Cream Sherries), to develop many own brand foodstuffs (Lyons cakes and ice-creams), and to build up a strong interest in the hotel and catering industry (Embassy Hotels and J.L. Catering, Ltd.). Allied Breweries - or, "Allied-Lyons" as they recently became known (Allied Breweries (U.K.) denotes the drinks sector) - are, in fact, a truly multi-national concern with commercial interests in almost every continent. Their annual turnover of £2.3 billion for 1980 made them the tenth largest company in Britain.

(Source: Allied Breweries Report and Accounts, 1981).

Since the Parent Company's inception in 1961, Ansell's Brewery Ltd. has been responsible for Allied's beer trade in the Midlands and South Wales. In 1980, Ansell's controlled nearly 2,000 pubs, in addition

to many off-licenses, steak bars and restaurants throughout the region. Traditionally, the Company had a fine reputation for its famous "mild" ales, although, more recently, it had started to make a name for itself on account of its bitter beers.

Ansells has a long history, dating back to the mid-19th Century, a great deal of which is relevant to our understanding of the 1981 strike. The remainder of this chapter comprises a brief review of the key events in the brewery's development from the year of its foundation to 1974. Chapter Three will then cover the period from 1975-1979: an era of unprecedented conflict at Ansells which paved the way for the events of 1981. Table 2.1. depicts the major industrial relations activities at the brewery up to and including 1974.

There is no single narrative which traces the history of Ansells brewery. The following account has been pieced together from an article appearing in the Birmingham Sketch for 1957 (Volume 1(6), pp 28-29 & 58), newspaper references, company information and archival materials relating to the period.

## 2.2. Ansells Prior to the Merger.

Ansells Brewery Ltd has its origins in the seminal activities of its founder, Joseph Ansell, who set up modest production as a maltster in 1857. By 1869, two sons had entered the business, which became known as Joseph Ansell and Sons. A period of expansion and diversification then followed, during which time the family turned its attention to brewing.

When Joseph died in 1885, his eldest son, William, became the senior partner. Just over four years later, the business was converted into a limited company with a share capital of £200,000

Table 2.1. Key Industrial Relations Activities Prior to 1975.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nature of Activity</u>
1959*	Ansells are unionized by T.G.W.U..
Dec., 1959	First-ever strike at brewery.
1960*	T.G.W.U. establishes closed shop at Ansells.
Mar., 1961	Merger takes place between Ansells, Ind Coope and Tetley Walker. Parent Company becomes known as Ind Coope Tetley Ansells (I.C.T.A.). Changes name to Allied Breweries in 1963.
Sep., 1962	Overtime ban by 300 draymen in dispute over wages/bonus payments.
Oct., 1963	All-out unofficial strike in protest over Management's attitude to a shop steward.
Feb., 1965	Strike by draymen over bonus payments.
Feb., 1968	Plant-wide unofficial strike caused by Company's use of non-union labour.
Oct., 1969	The "October Revolution": huge directoral "shake up" occurs at Allied Breweries. Company's structure becomes more centralised.
Nov., 1971	Strike over proposed redundancies.
Jan., 1972	1st draft of Birmingham Brewery Development Plan (the "Eades-Fairbairn Letter"). Document outlines proposed nature of Company activities for remainder of decade.
Dec., 1972	2nd draft of Birmingham Brewery Development Plan.
Sep., 1973	3rd draft of Birmingham Brewery Development Plan.

\* Precise date not established.

and, between 1889 and 1901, the number of licensed premises owned by the Company rose from 96 to 388. In 1901, the bottling of beers was undertaken, and a new Company, Ansells Brewery Limited, was formed to take over the assets of Ansell and Sons.

William Ansell died in 1904 and his younger brother, Edward, succeeded him as Chairman. The Company made strong progress right up to the outbreak of the First World War. The Investors Guardian for November 13th, 1915, stated that: "In the  $14\frac{1}{2}$  years since the formation of the present company... an amount equal to 50% of the £800,000 original capital has been added to the capital funds from profit." The war years had their problems in the form of restricted supplies and increased taxation; and this, together with a sharp rise in beer duty in 1922, started the trend for a number of amalgamations which continued well past the Second World War.

In 1923, Edward Ansell resigned as Chairman, thus severing the Company's last ancestral link with its founder. In the same year, Ansells acquired Rushton's Brewery Limited (adding 300 licensed houses to its undertaking) and, six years later, they absorbed the ordinary shares of Lucas and Co. (Brewers) of Leamington. In 1934, the Company commissioned the building of a new brewery and bottling stores on their  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -acre site at Aston Cross. This was the same year that Ansells took over the Holt Brewery (also of Birmingham), thus transforming themselves into one of Britain's largest breweries.

The war years (1939-1945) created similar problems to those encountered 25 years earlier, though this time there were additional difficulties in the form of bomb damage and fuel rationing. The immediate post-war years were then characterised by unprecedented *ly lsw??* rates of taxation which prompted the further expansion of the Company.



Between 1946 and 1952, Ansells acquired the ordinary shares of Lloyds, Newport, to broaden the scope of their activities in South Wales, and the Leicester Brewing and Malting Co. Ltd., to extend their local trading perimeters. Thus, by the time of their centenary in 1957, Ansells had developed into one of Europe's foremost breweries.

During all this time, the Company experienced few serious industrial relations problems. This position was changed when, on December 15th, 1959, Ansells employees took the unprecedented step of striking in support of a wage claim. This stoppage occurred only a matter of weeks after the workforce had been unionised by the Transport and General Workers' Union, and included, not only Ansells workers, but employees at the city's other main breweries, Atkinsons and Mitchells and Butlers. This was in the days of joint collective bargaining, and the three groups of workers were unanimous in rejecting the offer of 11 shillings per week plus a decrease in working hours (from 44 to 43½) jointly put forward by their employers.

On December 18th, Ansells workers marched three-abreast from the T.G.W.U. district offices in Broad Street to a mass meeting at Digbeth Town Hall. Here, they voted to accept an improved wage offer of 14 shillings and six pence on the flat rate of pay, with additional scope for bonuses. The strike had been an object lesson in how to catch the employer at his most vulnerable (e.g., during the Christmas period when the demand for beer is at its height).

In 1960, the T.G.W.U. established a pre-entry closed shop for all hourly-paid workers at Aston Cross. In the same year the brewery survived a serious fire. In spite of this, the Chairman was still able to announce record net profits and disclose that the Company

was planning to develop its brewing and fermenting capacities. (The Times, December 29th, 1960).

### 2.3. The Formation of Allied Breweries.

Throughout 1960, Ansells had begun to forge close trading links with Ind Coope's Burton-on-Trent brewery. On March 29th, 1961, this process was taken one step further when a merger was announced between Ansells, Ind Coope and a third brewery, Tetley Walker (of Warrington and Leeds). The joint equity capital of the new group was valued at £26 million, and it was estimated that their annual turnover would be in the region of £130 million. Their combined profits for the previous year amounted to £11½ million.

Evidently, the Ansells and Ind Coope boards had jointly agreed that the best way of developing their assets was to follow the recent trend of amalgamations in the beer industry. From here, they approached the Tetley Walker board to ask if they cared to participate and, on the basis of this alliance, a new holding company, Ind Coope Tetley Ansells (I.C.T.A.) was formed. A Parent Board was nominated, consisting of five directors from Ind Coope (the largest of the three breweries) and three each from Ansells and Tetley Walker.

Ansells were now part of the alliance that would soon become known (in March, 1963) as Allied Breweries. Their Chairman, A.E. Wiley, was openly enthusiastic regarding the prospects of this "commonwealth concept". (c.f. Birmingham Post, March 30th, 1961). He emphasised that, in spite of the merger, the Ansells Board would be left to conduct their own affairs, subject to the supervision of the Parent Board. Ansells retained both their name and "local identity". Only time would tell whether they had also retained their former autonomy.

#### 2.4. Commercial and Industrial Relations Activities During the Remainder of the 1960's.

During the 1960s, industrial action by employees became a sporadic, though by no means endemic, problem for Ansell's Management. Four major disputes occurred between 1962 and 1968, only two of which had issues in common.

In September, 1962, a two-week overtime ban by 300 draymen reduced beer production by 20% at a time when the Company needed to work at full capacity in order to meet the holiday season demand. Ten days into the dispute, it looked like Ansell's were determined to resist the draymen's demand for a basic wage increase and improved bonus system. (c.f. Birmingham Post, September 8th, 1962). However, four days later, the wage claim was conceded, almost in full, and bonus payments were brought into alignment with those paid to drivers and their "mates" elsewhere in the brewing industry.

A year later, in October, 1963, the Company was faced by an unofficial strike involving all sections of their hourly-paid workforce (i.e., production, distribution, maintenance and ancillary workers) when friction was caused by the attitude of a Departmental Manager towards a shop steward. The strike was resolved when the steward received a personal apology, and a mutually acceptable grievance procedure was agreed upon.

The question of bonus payments for draymen was, once again, the central issue of a strike in February, 1965. Here, the drivers took exception to Management's interpretation of an agreement regarding the speed at which they were expected to travel when making deliveries in the "Black Country". As the Branch Chairman, Ken Bradley, explained at the time:

"Previously, it had been agreed that delivery men could

be expected to travel at an average speed of 17 m.p.h. while they were on the roads in Birmingham and the Black Country and 21 miles in the hour while driving on the roads outside this area. Because road conditions are worse now than they were when this agreement was negotiated some years ago, we thought the 17 m.p.h. figure was excessive and, after negotiations, it was reduced to 15 miles in the hour. The dispute is over the interpretation of the new agreement. We say that whenever delivery vehicles are travelling in Birmingham and the Black Country, stretching to Wolverhampton and Stourbridge, they can only be expected to travel at 15 m.p.h.. The Management is trying to say that if a delivery man has to take his vehicle even 100 yards beyond the agreed boundary, the whole distance from the Ansell's depot at Aston, Birmingham, and back should be timed at 21 m.p.h.. This is ludicrous. It can mean that a man delivering at public houses beyond the agreed 15 miles in an hour area and into the 21 m.p.h. area will have far less time to complete his work than a man taking his vehicle a shorter distance. (Birmingham Post, February 23rd, 1965).

Management originally determined that they would not enter into any discussions regarding the bonus scheme. However, a week later, talks were held with Branch representatives and a negotiated settlement was agreed.

Finally, in February 1968, a second plant-wide stoppage occurred in protest at the suspension of seven employees who refused to unload supplies brought in by a non-union driver working for an outside contractor. The strike lasted for a week before Management made a commitment toward prohibiting the use of non-union drivers and limiting the use of outside contractors at the brewery.

In terms of commercial activity across the same period, Ansell's continued to make the same steady growth during the early and mid-1960s that had always been a feature of its existence. Indeed, the closest the Company came to any form of trauma was when the neighbouring Atkinsons Brewery closed down in 1963. Atkinsons had been bought out in 1959 by the larger Birmingham-based brewers, Mitchells and Butlers, in a deal worth £3 million. At this time, R.H. Butler,

the Chairman of "M. and B.", tried his hardest to scotch rumours that Atkinsons would be sold off and only its most profitable parts retained. (Birmingham Post, May 8th, 1959).

Given these assurances, Atkinsons employees might have supposed that their future was reasonably secure. However, in 1961, a merger took place between M. and B., Bass and Ratcliff and Gretton (to form Bass, Mitchells and Butlers Ltd), and, two years later, there occurred the closure of the brewery.

In the meantime, the popularity of Ansells own beers remained at a healthy level. Accounts published in September, 1964, showed sales figures well in excess of the national average. Ansells also continued their traditional policy of expanding wherever possible. For example, in February, 1966, they took over the 200 public houses formerly belonging to the Wrekin Brewery (Shropshire).

However, it was in the late-1960s that the Company experienced its most significant surge of growth. In 1967, a new T.V. advertising campaign was launched, based on the slogan "Ansells Makes Friends". This had an immediate impact on the market and was followed, a year later, by a similar campaign aimed at improving sales of bitter beer. Such was the success of this promotional drive that the sale of bitter improved by 50% (this in an area with a traditional preference for "mild"). Encouraged by this, Ansells launched a "back up" campaign, based on more T.V. advertising, which saw their sales increase by 100% in a twelve-month period.

In preparing to take advantage of this increased demand, Ansells commissioned a multi-million pound expansion programme, involving widespread modernisation and the installation of new packaging plant. Many improvements were introduced, such as an automatic flow control and the computerised setting of pressure in the conditioning tanks.

As a result of modernisation, the brewery was now able to produce 600 barrels of beer every four hours.

Ansells' prosperity was also clearly dependent on the performance of its Parent Company. Luckily, in this respect, Allied Breweries were becoming increasingly profitable, with they, too, always looking to expand and diversify. In 1968, Allied took over Showering's Vine Products and Whiteways Limited, thus making them an immediate force to be reckoned with in the country's wine and spirits sector; and, later in the year, they paid £16 million for two Dutch breweries: Oranjeboom of Rotterdam and the Three Horseshoes Brewery of Breda. This gave Allied an automatic share of 20% of the Dutch beer market and, more important, provided them with a convenient springboard into the neighbouring European markets.

However, in September, 1969, there was a radical managerial and structural shake-up within Allied Breweries, involving the sudden "retirement" of twenty directors (one sixth of the total Directorate). In making this revelation to the Press, the group Chairman, Sir Derek Pritchard, said that the changes were a consequence of a three-month study of Allied Breweries by the "P.E." group of management consultants, commissioned during ill-fated negotiations for the proposed takeover of Unilever by Allied.

P.E.'s conclusion was that policy decisions at Board level were slow and ineffective, often being diluted as they passed through a long chain of command. Thus, in line with their specific recommendations, Allied was being divided into three main operating companies, each presided over by a Chief Executive who would be responsible for its performance. These three companies were to be: the Beer Division; Wines, Spirits and Soft Drinks; and International Operations. Within the Beer Division itself, operations were now to be arranged on a

regional basis: Tetley Walker would cover the North, Ansells the Midlands, and Ind Coope the South.

Due to the re-organization, Ansells became a regional marketing company with an increased trading area and responsibility for 3,000 tied houses (twice as many as they previously owned). The less obvious implications of the "October Revolution" - so called because the changes took effect in October, 1969 - for industrial relations practice were inexorably linked to an attitudinal change accompanying the newly-recruited Executive personnel. Sir Derek Pritchard informed the news media that the average age of his directors had dropped by ten years now that "The young, tough professionals had been brought to the top." (Financial Times, September 29th, 1969). The precise effect of the October Revolution on industrial relations was not immediate. Its impact would not be felt until this new breed of professionals finally came of age.

#### 2.5. The November Strike, 1971.

Between 1968 and 1970, Allied Breweries invested £2 $\frac{1}{4}$  million on new plant and machinery at Aston Cross, thereby suggesting that the brewery's future was secure. However, an article appearing in the March 1st, 1971, edition of the Birmingham Post suggested that the workforce had become extremely suspicious of Management's proposal to do away with plans for a multi-storey plant and new transport depot that were due to be built in Birmingham.

According to Branch officers, Management had decided to abandon this project and authorise the building of a new complex outside of the Birmingham area. They interpreted this move as the first step in a gradual hiving off of work leading to future redundancies.



In August, 1971, a new wage deal was negotiated on behalf of the Ansells workers, making them the highest paid employees in the industry. (c.f. Daily Telegraph, August 3rd, 1971). However, any satisfaction deriving from this was extremely short-lived: on November 17th the workforce imposed an overtime ban in protest over a recent disclosure that 600 redundancies were required as a result of Allied's decision to use Burton, rather than Aston, as its radial distribution centre.

Eager to protect their Christmas trade, Ansells sent out letters to all 1,300 of their employees, appealing to them to call off the ban. The Acting Brewery Manager, Mr. J.R. Walker, protested that the Company were not demanding 600 redundancies. He insisted that manning levels ought not to decrease by more than 150 before the end of 1973, resulting from the change in the Company's plan. Given flexibility and "constructive discussion", the total number affected might well prove less than anticipated. (Birmingham Post, November 23rd, 1971).

However, 24 hours later, the Union intensified its action by refusing to handle "luxury" beers, such as Skol lager and Double Diamond. The Company responded, "tit for tat", by suspending the Guaranteed Working Week (an arrangement whereby workers are paid a full week's wage even when the work is not available). Then, Dr. Bernard Kilkenny, Allied's Chief Production Executive, warned the employees that they would be sent home if they continued to "black" the specialist beers. On the following day, a group of workers deliberately ignored the threat and were immediately suspended. At this, the production of beer was halted as their colleagues came out on strike.

Three days later, talks were held between representatives of Allied Breweries (led by a Chief Executive, Robert Eades) and a



T.G.W.U. delegation (led by Douglas Fairbairn, the Union's Divisional Secretary). These talks were extremely productive and, on the following day, the Union negotiators were able to report a favourable outcome to a mass meeting of their members. Specifically, the Union had received an assurance that only 100 jobs would be lost by the beginning of 1974 (the majority by "natural wastage") and that the total reduction by 1980 would not exceed 250.

#### 2.6. The Eades-Fairbairn Letter.

Arising from the above discussions between Allied Breweries and the T.G.W.U., a "Birmingham Brewery Development Plan", outlining proposed Company activities to the end of the decade, was drafted out in the form of a letter, dated January 17th, 1972, passed from Robert Eades to Douglas Fairbairn. (See Appendix III(i) for the "Eades-Fairbairn Letter"). It was stipulated, for example, that a retail delivery warehouse would be built at Aston Cross and a distribution depot erected at Aldridge to cope with future expansions in output.

With regard to proposed reductions in manpower, it was agreed that the present establishment of 933 full-time industrial employees at the brewery would be reduced to 683 by 1980. This reduction was to be achieved in two phases:

"(i) The Company will limit the overall reduction in jobs to no more than 100 by January, 1974....(ii) By 1980 there would be a further 150 less jobs and these numbers would be dealt with by natural wastage, voluntary redundancy and retirements."

Finally, it was understood by both sides that the Trade Union would "provide full cooperation on both job flexibility and the efficient operation of the Company's business."

Shortly after the exchange of the original letter, alterations in the Company's trading pattern led to successive revisions of the existing draft. (See Appendix III(ii) and (iii) for developments dated December 15th, 1972, and September 18th, 1973). Although stipulations regarding manning reductions remained as per the January, 1972, agreement, the combined effect of the subsequent drafts was to introduce even more work into the Birmingham area.

The December, 1972, amendment authorised that the trunking of packaged beers from Burton to Aldridge would be carried out by the Birmingham fleet; and the third draft agreement underlined that: "As from a date to be agreed after the opening of the new Aston Distribution Warehouse, Birmingham will package the draught Skol (brewed at Burton) to be distributed by the Aston retail fleet."

Relations between Union and Management since the November strike clearly tended towards greater cooperation. This is further emphasised by the following extract from an informal letter written by Robert Eades to Douglas Fairbairn in which he confessed himself "...extremely pleased with the way things have developed at Aston in recent months. I am sure the full cooperation which exists is advantageous to us all." (Letter dated December 27th, 1972).

## 2.7. Summary.

Ansells Brewery was founded in 1857. A century of steady growth saw its development into one of Britain's foremost breweries. In 1961, the Company merged with two other major breweries to form Allied Breweries - now Europe's largest drinks manufacturer. Ansells retained both its name and strong local identity whilst bearing the responsibility for Allied's markets in the Midlands and South Wales.

Prior to the merger, Ansells had suffered only one major strike: a wage dispute in 1959. During the 1960s, industrial action occurred sporadically without ever being a serious problem for Management. In 1971, the question of redundancies arose for the first time in the Company's history and became the central issue in a protest strike. A solution to the dispute, based on guaranteed job security, was consolidated by a series of draft agreements outlining the Brewery Development Plans to 1980.

These documents embodied a spirit of cooperation between Union and Management which lasted until the mid-1970s. The precise way in which this came to be replaced by an industrial relations climate characterised by greater hostility and distrust will be described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE. THE HISTORY OF ANSELLS (II): CHRONIC CONFLICT  
(1975-1979).

In July, 1975, a complicated dispute was begun, involving the 5 /377 (Ansell's) Branch of the T.G.W.U., Ansell's Brewery Limited and the National Association of Licensed House Managers (the N.A.L.H.M.). The dispute, which concerned the operation of a pre-entry closed shop for Ansell's publicans, lasted for two years and culminated in one of the most infamous incidents in the entire history of the Trades Union Congress.

Equally significantly, the dispute also marked an end to the "spirit of cooperation" that had existed at the brewery since the drafting of the Eades-Fairbairn letter, and was the beginning of a new period of chronic conflict at the Company which lasted for the remainder of the decade. A digest of the major industrial relations activity from 1975 to 1979 is given in Table 3.1..

3.1. The Fox and Goose Affair (I): Early Developments.

By 1975, trade unionism at Ansell's Brewery was organized in terms of a pre-entry closed shop system: all hourly-paid workers belonged to the T.G.W.U., whereas the Company's 400 clerical staff were members of the T.G.W.U.'s white-collar section, the Association of Clerical Technical and Supervisory Staff. The position regarding the recruitment of Ansell's pub licensees was slightly different to the extent that, although most of them belonged to the A.C.T.S.S., a small minority were members of the N.A.L.H.M..

In July, 1975, the A.C.T.S.S. launched their drive to obtain the sole trade union recruitment rights for all Ansell's licensees, thus precipitating a serious inter-union dispute between themselves and the N.A.L.H.M.. The dispute was taken one step further when

Table 3.1. Key Industrial Relations Activities, 1975 to 1979.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nature of Activity</u>
Jul., 1975	Beginning of the "Fox and Goose Affair": bitter inter-union dispute between Transport and General Workers' Union and National Association of Licensed House Managers.
Oct., 1975	Six weeks strike when Management appear to dishonour obligations under Eades-Fairbairn agreement.
Sep., 1977	Continuing Fox and Goose Affair reaches climax when T.G.W.U. are temporarily suspended from Trades Union Congress. Dispute is settled soon afterwards.
May., 1978	Strike over withdrawal of productivity bonus payments.
Jun., 1978	Threatened strike over implications of "pubs swap" exercise between Allied Breweries and other large brewers.
Sep., 1978	A "second Revolution" heralds the de-centralisation of Allied Breweries' management structure. New philosophy introduced: "firm and strong" approach to industrial relations.
Jan., 1979	Twelve-week strike begins at Allied's Tetley Walker brewery in Warrington. Workers are locked out and brewery is "closed", but re-opened again when dispute is settled.
May., 1979	Ansells announce need for 130 voluntary redundancies but back down when workforce threatens to strike.

the Brewery's draymen agreed to "black" all Ansells pubs whose licensees were members of the N.A.L.H.M.. Included, here, was a small pub called the "Fox and Goose" of Washwood Heath in Birmingham.

The A.C.T.S.S. then asked Ansells to stop deducting union dues on behalf of the N.A.L.H.M.. At first, Management seemed ready to accede to this request, but, when it was announced on September 22nd that the rival union was to be affiliated to the T.U.C., they took the decision not to become involved until the N.A.L.H.M. were made a party to discussions.

The clerical staff saw this merely as an excuse by Management to go back on their undertaking and decided that some form of protest was appropriate. In early October, Ansells' tele-sales girls (all members of the A.C.T.S.S.) refused to process the Company's orders for Skol and Double Diamond. The ban lasted for two weeks, during which time the Company asked that the action be withdrawn whilst the dispute was taken to A.C.A.S.. When the A.C.T.S.S. refused to consider this request, Management took the immediate step of suspending the tele-sales operatives "for refusing to work in accordance with their terms and conditions of employment".

### 3.2. An Old Wound Is Re-opened.

Also in progress at this time was a parallel dispute involving perceptions by the hourly-paid workforce that Management was deliberately delaying the implementation of certain agreements set out in the three stages of the Birmingham Brewery Development Plan. Branch officers saw this evident lack of commitment to the agreements as a sign that Allied Breweries were planning to run down the Ansells operation and concentrate their energies on Burton.

As already stated, one section of the Development Plan provided

for Ansell's workers to package Burton Skol, whereas another section established that the Birmingham fleet would deliver all beer intended for the West Midland region. Management disputed their position by stating that, although they were not disputing the agreements, they merely felt that it was not the most convenient time to implement them. They argued that current manpower and delivery vehicles were fully committed and that the racking plant was already at full capacity. Consequently, it would be impractical to try and introduce the plans.

A third area of dispute was unrelated to the Birmingham Brewery Development Plans, but concerned perceptions that Management were flouting a more recent agreement establishing Aston Cross as the hub of Allied's national radial distribution network. Such an agreement would have guaranteed greater job security for the Ansell's workers, but the Company denied that they ever considered this undertaking. It was this denial, together with apparent "hedging" by Management regarding the other issues, which gave rise to doubts about the future of the brewery.

Given the simultaneous development of two separate disputes, it was, perhaps, inevitable that some degree of overlap should occur. This can be illustrated with regard to the events surrounding a mass meeting on October 16th, 1975, at which the Ansell's workers gave their authority for shop stewards to call a strike failing a satisfactory settlement of their grievance.

Prior to the mass meeting, the Company placed advertisements in the major local newspapers which suggested that Union and Management were talking at cross purposes. Ansell's denied that they were dishonouring agreements, asserting that there was merely a "difference of opinion" as to how soon they could be implemented. (Birmingham Evening Mail, October 15th, 1975). The Company maintained that the

present dispute had nothing to do with job security, but was an extension of the rivalry between the A.C.T.S.S. and the N.A.L.H.M.. They protested that:

"...the dispute should be a matter for the unions concerned, if necessary with help from the T.U.C..  
...The delivery of all Company products should resume and all houses which have been blacked should receive normal deliveries." (ibid).

However, subsequent to the mass meeting, the workforce engaged in a variety of disruptive practices. This state of affairs continued until October 20th, the day that the tele-sales girls were suspended and 600 production workers were also laid off in what shop stewards interpreted as a thinly-veiled act of retaliation by the Company. A protest strike was called of all hourly-paid employees. This lasted for six weeks, during which time Management continued to insist that the dispute was concerned with inter-union rivalry, whereas Trade Union representatives alleged that this was merely a "smokescreen" to divert attention from the "real" issue of job security.

It soon became apparent that the strike was very effective. On November 20th, Ansells Chairman, Mr. Robin Thompson conceded that the dispute had already cost the Company £6 million in lost sales, hundreds of public houses had closed down and the stage had now been reached where it was necessary to start building up stocks for the important Christmas trade. (Birmingham Evening Mail, November 20th, 1975). However, it was not until a full week later that a settlement was achieved, by which time the cost of the strike had increased to £7,500,000. (Birmingham Evening Mail, November 28th, 1975).

At a mass meeting of the Ansells workers at Newtown Bingo Hall on November 30th, the vote was taken to accept a formula for a return to work based on a proposed £3 million investment programme for the brewery. It seemed that fears of an imminent closure of the brewery had, once again, been put to rest.





### 3.3. The Fox and Goose Affair (II): Later Developments.

During the negotiations of November 28th, 1975, Management and Trade Union representatives agreed that the Company would not be implicated any further in the dispute concerning the A.C.T.S.S. and the N.A.L.H.M. and that steps should be taken to settle the issue without Management's further involvement.

Immediate steps were taken to honour this agreement. On December 1st, 1975, representatives of the A.C.T.S.S./T.G.W.U. and the N.A.L.H.M. met with Mr. R.N. Bottini, the General Secretary of the Farmworkers' Union, who acted in the role of independent conciliator. When no headway was achieved at this meeting, the issue was referred to the Disputes Committee of the T.U.C.. Later that month, a meeting was held at Congress House where a subsequent attempt was made to settle the difference.

After giving the matter his due consideration, it was the Chairman's recommendation that: "...there should be urgent joint discussions between the two unions and that neither union should stipulate any condition as a prerequisite for joint examination of the problem. (Report of 108th Annual Trades Union Congress: p3).

For the next six months, little was heard of the inter-union dispute. Only one Ansell's landlord retained his membership of the N.A.L.H.M.; this was the proprietor of the Fox and Goose. Consequently, brewery draymen continued to black this particular licensee. However, the prospects for an immediate settlement rose when it was announced that the Fox and Goose was to have a replacement manager.

The T.G.W.U. Branch Chairman, Ken Bradley, adopted a more cautious approach. On June 10th, he informed Management that he would conduct his own inquiries into the "attitude" of the newly-arrived

replacement manager. In the meantime, deliveries to the Fox and Goose would continue to be blacked, and he warned that if the Company attempted to discipline any T.G.W.U. members who brought back beer originally intended for the pub, or made "provocative" statements to the Press, this would lead to an immediate confrontation. (Source: minutes, Union-Management meeting).

Later that day, an Ansell's delivery crew arrived at the Fox and Goose with the intention of supplying it with beer. However, when they asked to see the new manager's union card, they discovered that he, too, was a member of the N.A.L.H.M., and not the A.C.T.S.S. as required. At this, the beer was returned to the brewery and, once again, the pub stayed blacked.

On the following day, discussions resumed between the Branch Chairman and representatives of Management in order to determine how the former should conduct his inquiry. However, the meeting was interrupted when Mr. Bradley received a telephone call from an A.C.T.S.S. official, drawing his attention to an article on the front page of the Morning Advertiser\* in which a Management spokesman condemned the T.G.W.U.'s continued blacking of the "Fox".

The Branch Chairman's reaction to this was terse and to the point. He promised that:

"...under no circumstances would he or his members ever trust Ansell's again. As far as he was concerned, they had thrown the gauntlet down but, by the time he had finished with them, he doubted very much if there would be a gauntlet left to pick up... He said (that Management) were double-crossing bastards." (Source: minutes, Union-Management meeting).

Following on from this meeting, a letter was quickly despatched by the Branch Chairman to the Head Brewer, strongly denying that the T.G.W.U. were in breach of agreement regarding the blacking of supplies (as had been suggested in the Morning Advertiser), and

(\* The brewing industry's trade paper).

heavily implying that the Company had deliberately lied to the Press.  
(See Appendix IV).

Thus, it was in the context of worsening relations on all sides that the blacking of the Fox and Goose was referred to the T.U.C.'s Disputes Committee for a second time. The Committee met on July 9th, 1976, and made the following award:

"...that the T.G.W.U. should recognise the N.A.L.H.M. card of the newly-appointed manager of the Fox and Goose, Ansell's Ltd, Birmingham... The Committee also Award that there should be an immediate resumption of deliveries of supplies to the Fox and Goose."  
(Report of 109th Annual Trades Union Congress: p4).

In spite of this Award, Ansell's workers continued to black the Fox and Goose, and the matter finally came to a head when the National Secretary of the N.A.L.H.M. submitted a motion prior to the Trades Union Congress of September, 1977, calling for the suspension of the T.G.W.U..

A heated debate took place at the Conference proper, culminating in a card vote in favour of the T.G.W.U.'s immediate suspension. In the fifty-minute adjournment that followed, senior delegates from all unions hurriedly sought a method of "saving the face" of Britain's largest trade union and preventing the ignominious collapse of the Conference.

Finally, the card vote was nullified on the grounds that the A.U.E.W. had not satisfactorily completed its head count before casting its block vote. A re-count was ordered, and this time there was a clear majority against the T.G.W.U.'s suspension. Nevertheless, this debate did have the effect of hastening attempts at a settlement and, on October 17th, 1977, Allied Breweries announced that deliveries to the Fox and Goose would be resumed during the following week.

There can be no doubt that the Fox and Goose Affair had a damaging effect on relationships between the Ansell's workers and other important parties. In the Company's Annual Report and Accounts for

1976, Allied Breweries' Chairman was highly critical of the parochial selfishness displayed by the Ansell's workers in prolonging a dispute which ultimately cost the Company £6 million. Equally, the brewery men could not have endeared themselves to their national trade union leaders whose acute embarrassment they caused at the 1977 T.U.C. Conference.

#### 3.4. Two Disputes: May/June, 1978.

In May, 1978, Allied Breweries took a decision to end the payment of production bonuses to their 1,000 employees at Aston Cross. Under an agreement worked out in November, 1977, Ansell's workers were receiving a weekly bonus of £6.50 in exchange for allowing the commissioning of new keg head machinery and the opening of a distribution depot at Gravelly Park.

This agreement was in line with the pay policy sanctioned by the Labour Government in August of the previous year. According to this policy, productivity deals could be negotiated on top of a recommended 10% pay guideline, provided that they were "self-financing" and led to no increase in unit costs. By May, 1978, the Company was growing concerned that the employees had so far made no effort to honour their part of the bargain, especially in light of a recent statement from the Department of Employment disclosing its intention to monitor such deals.

Finally, Management determined that, since the bonuses could not be justified by an improvement in productivity, they had no other choice than to withdraw all payments. The Trade Union side argued, in turn, that their promises had been based on a condition that Ansell's would reduce the length of the working week. Management denied that this was ever the case and, on May 17th, all bonuses were withdrawn.

At a mass meeting held seven days later, the workforce took the decision to disrupt Bank Holiday supplies of beer by immediately going on strike. Management quickly expressed their anxiety that the dispute would severely affect supplies of beer for the Summer period, particularly if there was a prolonged spell of hot weather. (Birmingham Evening Mail, May 29th, 1978). However, on June 3rd, a settlement was reached: in return for a restoration of the £6.50 bonus, the Union gave an undertaking that new keg heads would be operable by June 19th, and that the distribution depot would be opened five days later.

No sooner had this strike been resolved than a second dispute occurred, also in June. The situation arose when Ansells decided to push forward with a series of "pub swaps" involving Bass Charrington, Courage and themselves. The objective of this exercise was to ensure that no one brewery had an undesirable concentration of pubs in any given area, thereby restricting consumer choice. Under an agreement reached between the companies in 1977, the pubs were to be exchanged on the basis of equivalent trade: Allied would hand over 90 to Courage and 43 to Bass Charrington, and receive 91 from Courage and 44 from Bass Charrington in return.

Trade Union Branch representatives had expressed concern at a number of meetings held previously that the reduction in radial distribution for Ansells draymen, implied in the agreement, would adversely affect both job security and earnings potential. The events of one such meeting - held on April 11th, 1978 - are described in some detail, below, since they illustrate both the considerable disquiet on the part of the Trade Union and the lack of openness and willingness to deceive that was a feature of industrial relations during this period.

It is evident from the minutes of the meeting in question that that Management deliberately tried to reassure the Trade Union by making it apparent that, although the proposed changes would cause a deficit in the workload of 180 barrels per week for the Birmingham transport fleet, this would be compensated for by the introduction of new product lines, such as cider and canned beers.

The Branch Chairman rejected this argument on the grounds that the product lines had been promised before the issue of pub swaps ever arose and, therefore, did not constitute "new work". This sparked off a heated discussion, at the end of which the Trade Union registered a "failure to agree". However, as the minutes described it:

"Immediately prior to Mr. Bradley making this statement, (A Manager) received a telephone call from the Press Office, from which he learned that the Birmingham Evening Mail had telephoned the Company to seek a statement regarding the failure to agree on pub swaps. Obviously, the information regarding a failure to agree had been communicated to the paper before the Company had any opportunity to make its offer known." (Source: minutes, Union-Management meeting).

As Management saw the situation, the Trade Union side were using the issue to provoke a confrontation at the brewery. It is impossible to verify the accuracy of this point of view. However, the situation did come to a head in June when strike action was threatened by the workforce. Only when the Branch Committee received assurances of guaranteed levels of earnings and a promise that no future pub swaps were being contemplated was the threat of industrial action finally lifted.

### 3.5. The "Second Revolution": September, 1978.

In the late-1970s, Allied Breweries continued its rapid development into one of Britain's largest companies. In the twelve months up

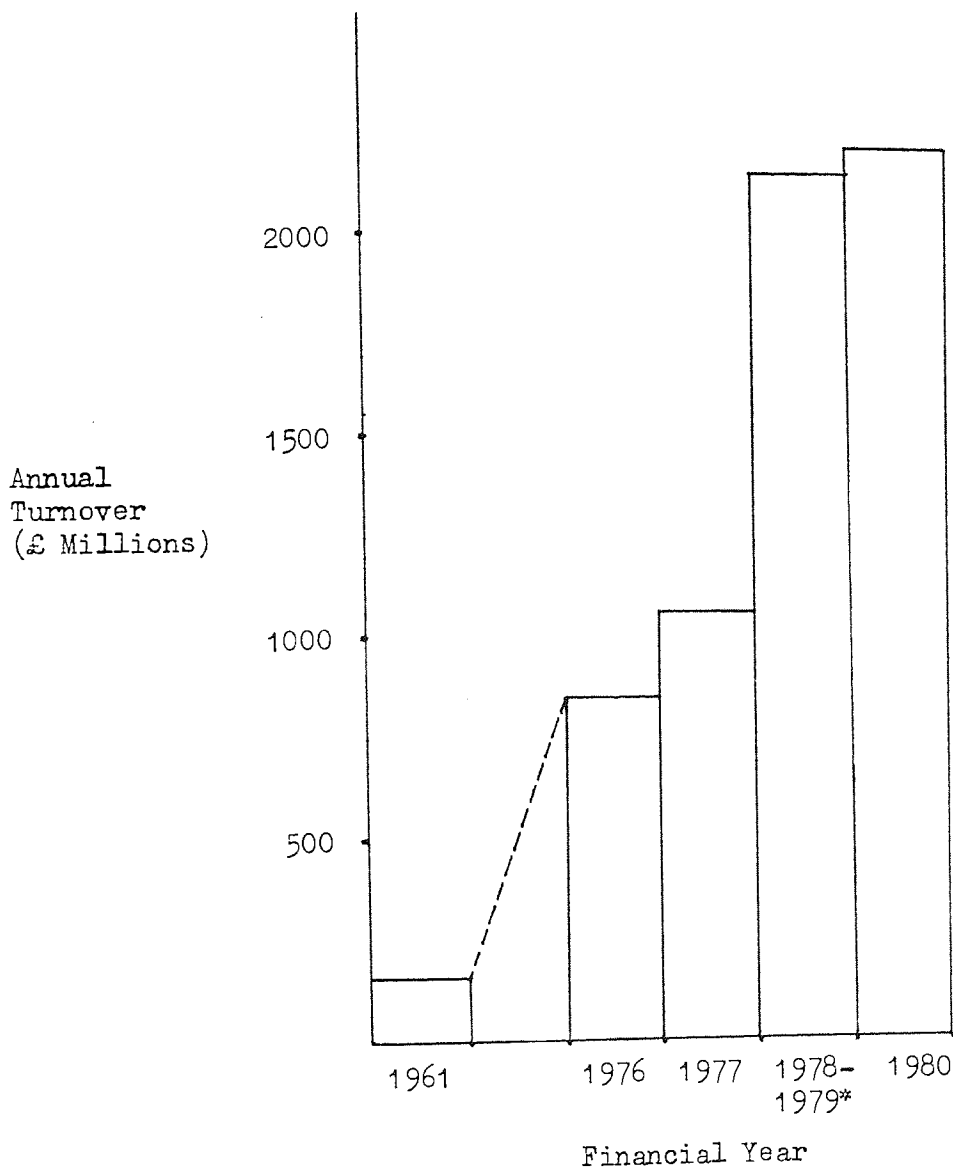
to August, 1978, there occurred the famous "cakes and ales" merger between Allied and the Lyons Bakery group (hence, Allied-Lyons), and other acquisitions such as Teachers Whiskey and Embassy Hotels. Some idea of Allied's sudden growth as a company may be discerned from Figure 2, which demonstrates the marked increase in the Company's annual turnover resulting from their various acquisitions.

However, the Company's sheer size was also making it difficult to manage. A Price Commission report into Allied Breweries concluded that the size of the Beer Division, coupled with its fragmentation, was responsible for many difficulties commonly associated with long lines of communication (namely, inadequately-motivated local management and poor identification with Company objectives on the part of the workforce).

When Allied reorganized themselves in 1969 (during the "October Revolution" of that year), they did so by adopting a centralised structure. Now, almost ten years on, their answer was to adopt an opposite course of action and to de-centralise their operations. As of September 25th, 1978, the Beer Division was reorganized into 11 separate "profit centres" (of which Ansells was one), each being accountable to the Main Board. This move was met with stern opposition in some quarters and prompted a top-level resignation by Dr. Bernard Kilkenney, the Chief Executive of Allied Breweries (U.K.).

Dr. Kilkenney was replaced in his role as head of the Beer Division by Mr. Douglas Strachen. In an interview with the Financial Times, shortly after his appointment, Mr. Strachen spelled out the implications of the reorganization for the running of the Beer Division. He promised that, where previously details of the Division's results had not been published, the results of all the regionally-based profit-centres would, henceforth, be published in full. These results would have great significance for the separate companies,

Fig. 2. Commercial Expansion of Allied-Lyons (Formerly Allied Breweries)  
by Annual Turnover, 1961 to 1980.



(\*N.B. 1978-1979 = 75 weeks).

(Source: "Are You a Skolar?", Allied Breweries(1981)).



since, as Mr. Strachen put it, "Profitable companies will get all the investment and the unprofitable won't." (Financial Times, August 23rd, 1978).

Mr. Strachen also explained that the Company's future approach to industrial relations would be based on the premise that a "firm and strong approach was one the unions appreciated best"; but that Allied would be prepared to disclose "sensitive" information to enable employees to see why certain decisions had been made. (ibid).

This "new style" of management called for executive personnel who were tough enough to be able to convert theory into practice. In this respect, it was fortunate for Allied that the "new breed" of professionals who were introduced during the October Revolution of 1969 had now achieved maturity. Their approach to the unions was likely to be uncompromising, a fact soon illustrated by their handling of a strike at Allied's Tetley Walker brewery in Warrington in January, 1979.

On this occasion, Management were determined to resist what they looked upon as an excessive wage claim, and took the step of temporarily closing the brewery and locking out the workforce. The dispute lasted for twelve weeks, making it the longest-ever brewery strike, but, in the end, it was Management's will that prevailed.

### 3.6. The Renewed Battle for Jobs.

It is also conceivable that the pressure to comply with the new Company policy was the reason behind the decision by Ansell's Chairman and Managing Director to send letters to all employees, dated May 18th, 1979, explaining the need for urgent reductions in manpower. (See Appendix V).

Mr. Thompson said that Ansells' main problems were that wages were too high, the brewery was overmanned and the Company was making no financial return on its capital expenditure. He implied that, unless economies were achieved, the Parent Company would not be prepared to invest in the brewery. Finally, the Chairman pointed out that discussions with shop stewards had centred on such schemes as voluntary redundancy and natural wastage, but that the Trade Union side had withdrawn before any progress could be made.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Thompson told local newspaper reporters that wages at the brewery (i.e., £136 per week, on average) were half as much again as the "going rate" for the industry. He also claimed that a survey showed how it was possible to run the brewery with 750 men (around 250 less than the present number of employees). According to the Chairman, such problems stemmed from the fact that Management had conceded issues to the Union so often in the past "in order to keep the beer flowing"; and because delivery times were negotiated in the pre-motorway age and had not been amended since.

Mr. Thompson outlined his concern for the future of the brewery:

"We have a negative cash flow in the Company this year, which means that we are having to borrow from the Parent Company in order to finance our current level of expenditure. Next year, however, we shall have to live within our means since it will be difficult for me to make a good argument to the main Board that we should get more money for modernisation unless our productivity improves." (Sunday Mercury, May 20th, 1979).

He further maintained that one condition of the 1978 Hourly Paid Agreement was that the Union would cooperate in measures to improve productivity through Manning Efficiency and other methods.

However, the Ansells Branch membership were totally opposed to such measures. They voted at a mass meeting on May 21st to give shop stewards the appropriate authority to call a strike if this should prove necessary to avoid a cut in the workforce. The Branch Chairman

took the opinion that:

"There is no need for such a reduction. Last year the workforce accepted a pay rise of 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ %, and we made that sacrifice on the understanding that it would lead to greater job security, and at that time manning levels were agreed." (Birmingham Post, May 22nd, 1979).

In the event, Management's eagerness to avoid a costly strike over the Bank Holiday period proved decisive. There was no immediate reduction in manpower.

### 3.7. General Features of Industrial Relations at Anells, 1975-1979.

This latest "climb down" by Anells (together with the Chairman and Managing Director's earlier comment regarding the Company's practice of yielding to the Trade Union in order to maintain beer supplies), emphasises the important point that the threat of industrial action during negotiations was often sufficient to persuade Management to accede to the workers' demands.

Strike action was truly a weapon of last resort, especially since various alternative forms of industrial action (e.g., overtime bans, go-slows, a refusal to perform certain tasks or "give cover" for other groups of workers) could be employed to put pressure on the Company whilst seldom involving a substantial loss of wages. Figures available for the years 1973 to 1979 point to the increased prevalence of this form of industrial relations activity between 1975 and 1979: another index of the worsening relationship between Union and Management during this period. (See Table 3.2.).

### 3.8. A Postscript: Events at B.L. Cars, 1979-1980.

Finally, we consider an industrial relations matter occurring outside of Allied Breweries, at B.L. Cars. As we shall see in Chapter

Table 3.2. Prevalence of Alternative Forms of Industrial Action\* at Ansell's Brewery, 1973 to 1979.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
(a) Prior to 1975	
1973	11
1974	7
(b) 1975 to 1979	
1975	35
1976	17
1977	23
1978	13**
1979	29

\* E.g.: go-slows, overtime-bans, refusals to work, refusals to perform certain tasks or handle certain brands of beer, refusals to provide cover for other groups of workers.

\*\*Figures available for first six months only.

(Source: Ansell's Brewery Limited).

Six, this matter exerted a powerful influence on the way the Ansell's workers defined the 1981 strike.

Contemporary accounts of industrial relations at B.L. are provided by Boulter(1982), Dunnett(1980) and Edwardes(1983). These commentators would probably agree that it was the decision by B.L.'s management to sack their Longbridge shop steward convener, Derek Robinson, in November, 1979, which provides the obvious focal point for an analysis of recent industrial relations activity at the company.

Just prior to Robinson's dismissal, B.L. had conducted a ballot of their workforce in what was regarded as an important feasibility test of a recovery plan devised by the Chairman, Sir Michael Edwardes, who had been appointed in 1977 to rescue the Company from collapse.

The basis of Sir Michael's recovery plan was a 92-page document, the "Draft Agreement", containing recommendations for more efficient working practices, such as: greater cooperation in the commissioning and operation of new facilities; more mobility between jobs; the elimination of "demarcation lines"; the replacement of obsolete skills by new technology; and the elimination of restrictive practices (especially those relating to overtime). Above all, however, it was B.L.'s desire to remove the concept of "mutuality" (the practice whereby shop stewards are consulted with regard to proposed changes in shop floor operations) and emphasise that, henceforward, it would be management's sole prerogative to execute change. (Boulter, op.cit.).

The eleven B.L. unions were unanimously opposed to such revolutionary proposals. However, when faced with this lack of cooperation, management took the step of balloting the rank-and-file "over the heads" of their elected representatives. Prior to the ballot, management emphasised that, if the workforce failed to endorse their proposals, B.L. would not approach the Government for the £250 million

necessary to ensure the Company's survival. The outcome was a 7:1 majority in favour of accepting the Recovery Plan.

A campaign of resistance was immediately organized by the B.L. Shop Steward Combine, and it was for his part in this action that Derek Robinson was dismissed. His union, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, recommended strike action in support of Robinson's re-instatement. The decision whether to go on strike was taken at a mass meeting of all Longbridge workers in the Spring of 1980. Employees had already been warned that if they went on strike preparations would be made to wind up the Company. Faced with this dilemma, the workforce voted 10:1 against any action in support of Robinson.

Seemingly encouraged by this success, B.L. decided to implement the new working practices without obtaining the formal consent of the unions. In return, employees were to receive a 5% wage increase on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis. Then, Sir Michael further seized the bull by the horns by speeding up a far-reaching redundancy programme. In the meantime, employees were warned that any opposition to these measures would merely jeopardise the introduction of the new £275 million Mini Metro project scheduled to begin at Longbridge.

Nevertheless, a growing sense of disaffection on the part of many employees was expressed in the form of a series of "bushfire" strikes by 18,000 members of the T.G.W.U.. Sir Michael responded with the ultimatum that, unless the employees concerned returned to work by a given deadline, they would all be sacked. On the following day, the strikers took the advice of their union and staged an immediate return to work. If, as seemed likely, the B.L. Chairman had been looking for an opportunity to "take on" and defeat the powerful trade union organization at B.L., this latest turn of events suggested that he had thoroughly succeeded in this objective.

### 3.9. Summary.

The five-year period from 1975 to 1979 saw a deterioration in the relationship between the Ansell's Management and their hourly-paid workforce. "Manpower Efficiency" became the recurrent theme in conflict between the two sides; industrial action grew more commonplace; and there was a breakdown of the trust and cooperation that prevailed from 1972 to 1974. The tenacity of the Ansell's workers as a trade union branch was exemplified by their conduct during the so-called Fox and Goose Affair, an inter-union dispute which brought them into conflict with their national representatives on the T.G.W.U..

Events at the neighbouring B.L. Cars became a national focal point in November, 1979, with considerable interest being aroused by the Company Chairman, Sir Michael Edwardes', methods of overcoming trade union resistance to change. Our brief digression into affairs at B.L. takes us, conveniently, into 1980 and the "prelude" to the Ansell's strike.

## CHAPTER FOUR. INTO THE 1980's: THE PRELUDE TO THE STRIKE.

### 4.1. A Commercial Red Herring.

Despite constantly reminding their workforce that large-scale economies were necessary if the Birmingham brewery was to survive, Ansells continued to invest huge sums of money in developing their production facilities and improving the region's pubs. For example, it was announced in January, 1980, that Ansells' pubs were to receive a major "facelift" as part of Allied's nationwide campaign to restore a stronger sense of "local identity" to the separate trading regions.

Later that month, it was further disclosed that Ansells were spending £2 million on the completion of a beer reservoir for the cold storage of mild and bitter beers. This reservoir would eventually comprise of twenty giant tanks with an overall capacity of seven million pints.

Indeed, it appeared that Ansells were experiencing a major improvement in fortune when Allied announced pre-tax profits of £112 million for the 53 weeks to March 3rd, 1979. The Annual Report and Accounts for 1979 (first published in June, 1980) showed that profits for the beer division alone were £54.6 million, and shareholders were informed that: "All major companies contributed to this favourable result. Ansells enjoyed a period of relative peace and achieved a further gain in sales volume; an important new distribution depot at Gravelly Park, Birmingham, was opened and further progress was made in the rationalisation of the managed estate, with much emphasis being placed on reducing the number of insufficiently profitable houses." (Annual Report and Accounts, Allied Breweries, 1979:p12).



In a similar vein, the June 11th edition of the Birmingham Evening Mail contained an article in which the Vice-Chairman of Allied Breweries, Sir Derrick Holden-Brown, paid the following tribute to the Ansell's workers:

"The Company has performed well, turned in a profit, given better customer service, and is going from strength to strength. They and everyone else in Allied will be involved in the new employees' share scheme that we hope to bring out in 1981."

However, this renewed sense of optimism was, unfortunately, misplaced. The sudden popularity of the Ansell's workforce was based, not on their most recent performance, but on their efforts in the year ended March 23rd, 1979. Since then, the Ansell's Chairman had stressed the need for economies in the form of redundancies and revised working practices. The present euphoria, therefore, merely disguised the recent downturn in trade and accompanying profit situation. If manning reductions were considered a prerequisite to the Company's well-being in 1979, by 1980 Management saw an even more pressing need for redundancies.

Some indication that the Company meant to renew their efforts to reduce manpower had already been provided at a meeting between the Ansell's Management and T.G.W.U. representatives on April 24th, which was held to discuss the imminent closure of the Telsen maintenance works. The Trade Union side were concerned that the closure of Telsen would result in the loss of a number of jobs that would go to outside contractors. The Branch Chairman, Ken Bradley, emphasised that a recent resolution by his members made it a "matter of principle" that they should resist any reduction in jobs.

The Branch Chairman further complained that there was a repeatedly one-sided emphasis as to how costs could be cut at the Brewery:

"He pointed out that in the last ten days something like 1,200 barrels had to be recycled, either through Beer Distribution or Beer Recovery...He also made reference to beer that had been shipped out of here to Gravelly Park and then returned to the Brewery, and he said that such issues as this certainly did not give him or his members any confidence in the Management." (Minutes of meeting).

Regarding this point, the Union representatives demanded to know whether it was Management's intention to propose further manning reductions in the foreseeable future. When Management declined to discuss this wider issue, the Branch Chairman predicted that bitter conflict would occur during the Summer months. In fact, Bradley's forecast was borne out in the form of a short strike in early July. A detailed account of the strike is given below. The key activities occurring across the strike and during its aftermath are set out in Table 4.1., overleaf.

#### 4.2. The 1980 Pay Dispute.

On July 2nd, 1980, a mass meeting was held of the Ansell's Branch Membership to determine their response to a managerial ultimatum making their annual pay rise conditional upon the acceptance of 130 redundancies. Specifically, Management were offering a £13 a week raise and a £100 "lump sum" payment in return for the required reduction in manpower. During the course of the mass meeting, the workforce reaffirmed its position regarding any loss of jobs and voted to stage an "indefinite strike" should there be insufficient progress in talks with Management over the next few days.

Within two days of the mass meeting, Management issued a statement to all shop stewards, warning them that:

"The Company has drawn attention to the serious risk arising for brewery employees for any stoppage of

Table 4.1. A Diary of the 1980 Dispute and its Consequences.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nature of Activity</u>
2.7.80.	One day protest strike over Company's pay policy (annual wage rise conditional upon acceptance of 130 redundancies).
4.7.80.	Workers warned that Anells will close the brewery and transfer production if they strike as planned.
7.7.80.	Workers ignore threat and go on strike.
8.7.80.	Settlement reached: employees to receive pay rise of £15 a week; Independent Manpower Committee to investigate optimal manning levels at brewery. Both sides to accept results as "binding".
31.10.80.	Results of "Manpower" investigation are published. Committee concludes that brewery is overmanned by 44.
2.1.81.	Anells Works Notice announces suspension of Guaranteed Working Week.
6.1.81.	Anells publically announce plans for a four-day working week.

work in view of the surplus brewing capacity elsewhere and the depressed state of the trade. The high labour cost at Ansell's due to overmanning and high wages would force the Company, in the event of a strike, to transfer the work elsewhere and close the Brewery."

In addition, each employee received a letter explaining that, if the strike went ahead, the Company would have no option other than to close the Brewery and immediately notify the Employment Secretary of "a redundancy situation affecting 600 employees".

The Branch Chairman summarised the Trade Union position by saying "We are surprised and apprehensive but don't feel we could be cowed into accepting the Company's proposal." (Birmingham Post, July 5th, 1980). Consequently, on July 7th, the Ansell's workforce defied the Company's warning and embarked on their indefinite strike.

It is impossible to tell how close the Brewery came to closure. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the threatened closure was not carried out and a settlement was reached on the following day. The precise details of the agreement for an end to the dispute were set out in an Ansell's information brief for July 18th. First, the £13 a week "basic" and the lump sum of £100 were to be reorganised into a weekly pay rise of £15 a week; second, a joint working party would devise a new wage structure in time for the next annual pay round; and, finally, an Independent Manpower Committee would be set up in order to establish the Brewery's optimal manning requirements.

In September, 1980, Management announced that Ansell's would be pegging back their prices for the remainder of the year. This was in sharp contrast to the decisions taken by most of their competitors to increase their prices. The explanation given in the Company's newsheet, "Contact", was that the strategy was designed to help recover a recent loss of market share, but that other considerations, such as the effects of unemployment and short-time working on

consumer purchasing power had also been taken account of.

The newsheet also revealed that the Independent Manpower Committee had recently begun its investigations and was due to submit its recommendations by no later than October 30th. Management were emphatic in declaring that: "It is not proposed that further reductions in manning will be required beyond those recommended by this Committee."

#### 4.3. The Work and Findings of the Independent Manpower Committee.

The Independent Manpower Committee met for the first time on August 18th, 1980. It consisted of two external nominees: Mr. T. McHale of Allied Breweries and Mr. A. Davis of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The planned approach to the operation was for the Committee to meet jointly with the Departmental Manager, supervisor and shop steward for each section, to ask the manager to state his optimum manning requirements, and then invite comments from the other parties. Ostensibly, this was to have been a simple process, made easier by the full cooperation of both sides. However, as the Committee later complained in their report, things did not quite work out as anticipated.

The tendency towards non-cooperation in such matters was already an established feature of industrial relations at the brewery. This can be illustrated with regard to activities surrounding independent Union and Management exercises to determine prospective workloads for delivery crews just prior to the opening of Gravelly Park. Very briefly, a group of stewards had their wages withheld for working on the project during the Company's time without first obtaining Management's permission. It is, perhaps, an indictment of the lack of

trust between both sides that they should have felt it necessary to work separately on essentially the same project. Further distrust was created by this latest turn of events which culminated in accusations by the Branch Chairman that Management were conducting a "witch hunt" against his stewards and were intent on sabotaging their investigations. (Source: minutes, Union-Management meeting).

This fundamental lack of cooperation pervaded the Manpower Investigation. Even from the start, there was a wide difference of opinion between Union and Management as to which departments were to be investigated, an agreed list being unavailable. Nor were there any lists of current establishments (i.e., the number of employees in each department), and valuable time was lost as the Committee were forced to make their own preliminary enquiries. Finally, to borrow the Committee's own words, "certain domestic arrangements regarding use of offices and dining facilities had been made which were not conducive to establishing the right forum and atmosphere in which to proceed." (Manpower Committee Investigation at Ansell's Brewery Ltd, 1980:p3, para 2.3.3.).

The Committee's progress was checked still further when shop stewards told them that they were unwilling to cooperate until the Annual Wage Agreement had been signed. Sensing that to insist otherwise might exacerbate the situation, the Committee temporarily withdrew until the Agreement was signed (i.e., September 9th), by which time they had only seven more weeks in which to complete their investigations.

Planned discussions and observations were re-scheduled for September 11th. However, despite advance circulation of the revised arrangements, further setbacks occurred. Certain supervisors complained that they had not been asked to attend in writing, and

several shop stewards protested that they had been informed too late and requested more time to prepare their case. When the investigation was finally underway, problems automatically arose whenever either party suspected that proposed changes would conflict with current practices or long-standing agreements. Meetings were invariably disjointed, being constantly adjourned or re-scheduled to allow the persons involved to seek clarification as to whether the proposed changes were within the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Most irksome of all, from the Committee's point of view, were the repeated attempts of both sides to undermine each others' assertions. This may be illustrated with reference to a disagreement regarding operations in the brewery's Keg Plant. Here, a difference of opinion arose over the use of elevators in the department. Management based their requirements on the understanding that only one elevator was essential to the task, proposing that there should be an appropriate reduction in manpower from 78 to 52. Shop stewards objected to this on the grounds that two elevators were necessary for the smooth running of the operation.

Senior Production Managers were then consulted, and they suggested that it should be assumed, for the sake of argument, that two elevators were in use. However, the Production Managers still insisted that this would only increase the overall requirement by four, making a grand total of 56 employees. This created considerable ill-feeling on the Trade Union side, and the matter was only finally resolved when the Committee took the liberty of observing operations for themselves and advocated a reduction in personnel from 78 to 66.

At length, the Committee overcame such impediments and were able to submit a final recommendation that there be an overall reduction in manpower of 44. Table 4.2. summarises the proposed basis of this

Table 4.2. Reductions in Manning Levels Recommended by Independent Manpower Committee.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Current Manpower</u>	<u>Recommended Manpower</u>	<u>Surplus Manpower</u>
Aldridge	142	133	9
Brewery			
-Labourers	314	282	32
-Ancillary	71	71	0
Gravelly Park	256	256	0
My Cellar	44	41	3
Totals	827	783	44

N.B. Some departments excluded from investigation.

(Source: "Manpower Committee Investigation at Ansell's Brewery Ltd", 1980: pp 10-11)



reduction. It was clear that the Trade Union side took most satisfaction from the findings, considering that they "proved a point" to Management. For their part, Management complained that the shop stewards had deliberately deceived the Committee, thus disguising the "true" level of overmanning at the brewery. Nevertheless, Ansell's remained faithful to the original basis of agreement, seeing to it that the proposals were implemented in full.

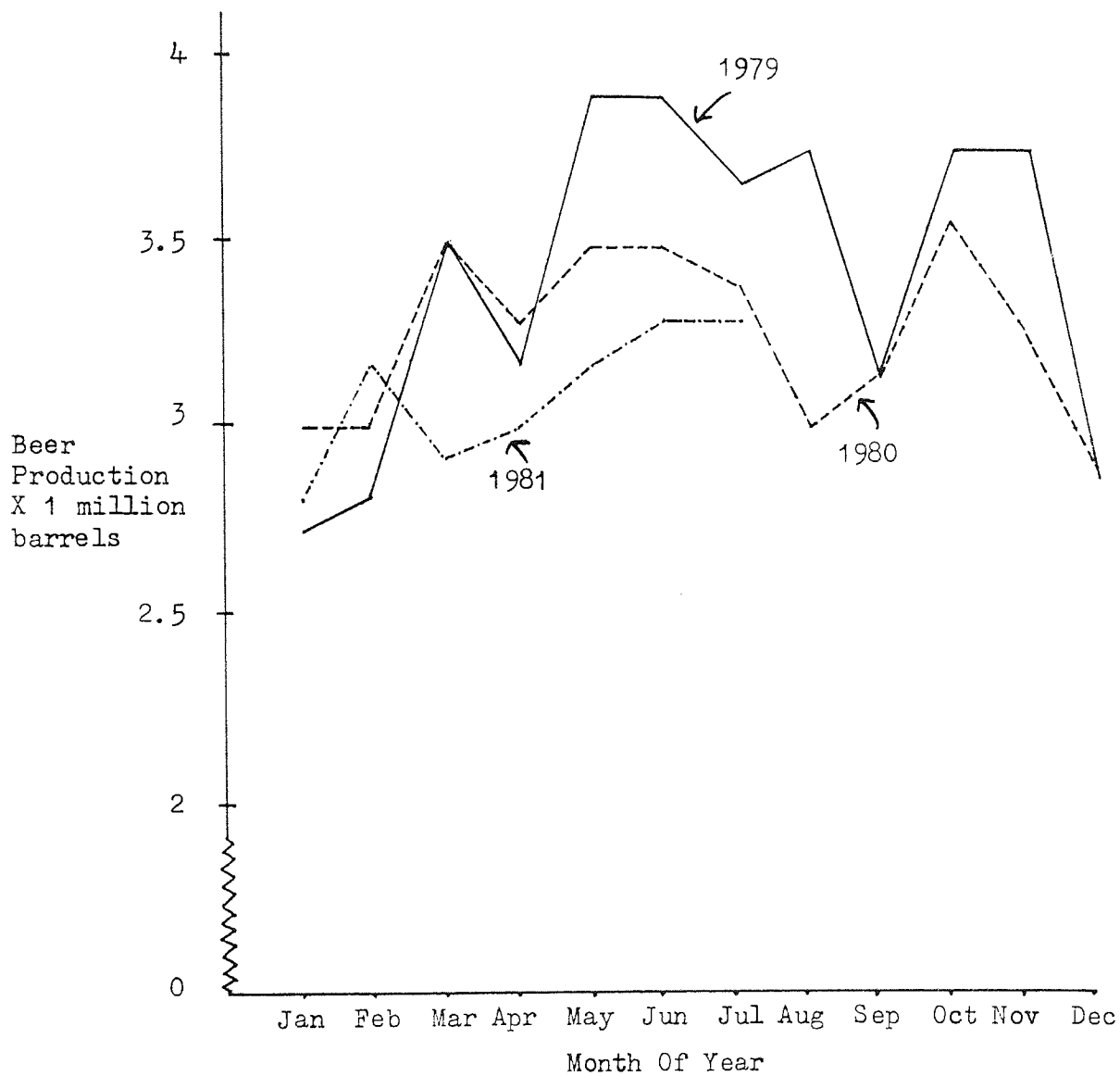
#### 4.4. The Introduction of the Four-Day Working Week.

Ansell's Management were clearly pinning their hopes on the possibility of the price-holding exercise having a beneficial effect on sales. The sale of the Company's beer in the West Midlands was down by 6.7% on the previous year (source: Ansell's Brewery Ltd), and Management calculated a projected loss of £2 million over the next six months.

Declining sales were a feature of the Brewing Trade in general. An article appearing in the March (1981) edition of "The Brewer" drew a parallel with the situation in the 1930s. The diagram overleaf shows the relative trends in beer production from the beginning of 1979 to the end of the Ansell's strike. A gradual decline in the production of beer is instantly discernible.

Given this worsening trend, Management considered it more imperative than ever that some additional form of economy be made. Their commitment to abide by the findings of the Manpower Committee ruled out any idea of a major redundancy programme, and, unable to peg prices back indefinitely, they took what seemed to be their only remaining option. On January 2nd, 1981, an Ansell's Works Notice informed employees of the suspension of the Guaranteed Working Week.

Fig 3. Monthly Production Levels of Beer in the U.K., January 1979 to July 1981.



(Source: "The Brewer", January and October, 1981).

As of January 11th, all production and distribution workers were required to work a four-day week.

Shortly afterwards, each employee received a letter from the Personnel Director (Appendix VI (i)), explaining the need for the four-day week in terms of a seasonal reduction in trade made worse by the effects of the recession. The letter also outlined the arrangements that had been made for the workforce: Each Monday would be the day of lay-off, for which employees would receive the statutory £8 per day, provided that "they comply with the reasonable requirements by Management, do not refuse suitable alternative work and are not involved in a trade dispute."

A week later, a subsequent letter, containing a "Message from the Chairman" (Appendix VI (ii)), was sent out to all employees. Here, Mr. Thompson pointed out that the price-holding exercise had been successful, but that it was now necessary to put up prices in order to cover increases in wages and salaries and the cost of repairing the Company's pubs and distribution depots. He warned the employees that any disruption in services to customers would only prolong the need for the shortened working week, but tried to reassure them that the present system would be as short-lived as possible.

In spite of the above remarks, the Ansells workers were by no means convinced of the necessity of the abbreviated working week. Six months previously, Sir Derrick Holden-Brown had cheerfully informed them that the Company was "going from strength to strength." Moreover, workers at Allied's other breweries were working normally, as, indeed, were workers at Mitchells and Butlers, even though the downturn in their trade was, allegedly, more serious than at Ansells. Finally, there had been nothing in the workers' own immediate experience (e.g., reductions in work loads) to prepare them for such a

trauma. When set against this backcloth, the four-day working week seemed an unnecessary, not to say highly provocative, measure.

## CHAPTER FIVE. THE STORY OF THE STRIKE.

This chapter contains a narrative of the most significant events of the strike from the commencement of the four-day week to the termination of the dispute. The text is divided into three sections: the first deals with events leading up to the closure; the second with attempts to enforce a re-opening of the brewery; and the third with the gradual decline of the strike once such attempts had failed. This three stage description is roughly parallel to our later analysis of the dispute in terms of: (i) the decision to strike; (ii) the maintenance of commitment; and (iii) the de-mobilisation of the strike. Each section is accompanied by a diary of activities and events relative to the period covered.

### 5.1. Part 1 of the Strike: The Strike Decision and its Consequences.

Whatever their views on the four-day week, the Ansell's workers duly obeyed the Management instruction to turn up for work on Tuesday, January 13th. However, when production workers arrived at the brewery, they immediately discovered that the necessary preparatory work had not been performed by employees in the previous phase of operations and complained that they were unable to carry out their normal duties.

This situation evidently arose when a section of workers refused to follow an instruction by a Shift Brewer, two days earlier, to "drop" (i.e., transfer) beer so that it would be available for racking (packaging) on Tuesday. The men reminded the Head Brewer of a "strict" Company rule forbidding the dropping of beer more than 24 hours prior to its being racked before disobeying the order.

The Tuesday morning production shift claimed to have no prior

Table 5.1. A Diary of the Strike. Part One.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nature of Activity or Event.</u>
January	
13.1.81.	Four-day week commences, but 200 production workers are sent home due to "disruptive practices".
14.1.81.	Mass meeting held. All hourly-paid workers vote to go on strike.
15.1.81.	Ansells Chairman warns of compulsory redundancies as an alternative to the 4-day week.
18.1.81.	Ansells express readiness to drop 4-day week on condition that employees accept terms contained in their "9-point plan" (i.e., 96 redundancies, revised working practices, new conditions of employment).
19.1.81.	Management send out letters to all hourly-paid workers indicating the above points.
21.1.81.	Ansells send out further letters explaining their decision.
23.1.81.	Telegrams sent out to 60 morning shift workers instructing them to return to work on the next day (January 24th) or be sacked. Letters posted to remainder of workforce establishing similar deadline for January 26th. Chairman/Managing Director warns that Ansells may close if dispute continues.
26.1.81.	Employees ignore the deadline for a return to work.
27.1.81.	Ansells issue dismissal notices to all their hourly-paid workers.
30.1.81.	Ansells send out offers of re-engagement to all employees.
31.1.81.	Mass meeting. Workers vote to continue stoppage.
February	
3.2.81.	Ansells Chairman states intention to recruit workers "from the dole queue".

4.2.81.

Strike made "official" by Transport and General Workers' Union.

9.2.81.

Ansells announce the "permanent closure" of their Aston brewery with a loss of over 600 jobs. They state that 300+ jobs at their two distribution depots (Aldridge and Gravelly Park) will be spared if negotiations are swiftly concluded.

9.2.81.

Emergency mass meeting. Workers refuse to accept that closure is permanent.

knowledge of the incident, but Management took an altogether different view. They considered that this was "wilful obstruction" on the part of their employees. A spokesman for the Company pointed out that "It seems that there is calculated action taking place to prevent the smooth working of the four-day week." (Birmingham Post, January 14th, 1981). Indeed, it soon became apparent that Management were not prepared to let the matter rest. At a departmental meeting held later on Tuesday morning, the workers involved in Sunday's incident were informed of the Company's intention to withhold their "earnings protection" payment (a minimum of £69) because of their refusal to drop the beers. At this, the group concerned took immediate strike action, whereupon Management proceeded to lay-off without pay the 200 production workers who were involved in Tuesday's "disruptive action".

On the following day, a mass meeting was held of all the Brewery's hourly paid workers. Here, it was agreed that Management were adopting a "hard line" and that they had no right to impose the four-day week. Union officials referred to the implications of allowing Ansell's to "get away with it" for future Management practice and strongly recommended that the workforce retaliate. Thus, when it came to the vote, there was an overwhelming decision (only two abstentions) in favour of an all-out strike.

In subsequent negotiations between Ansell's Management and District and Branch representatives of the T.G.W.U., the former indicated that they were prepared to withdraw the lay-off notices on condition that the Branch Committee agreed to 96 more redundancies. The Trade Union response was that, since the issue regarding the four-day week was, technically, no longer in dispute, there was no reason why the men should not return to work whilst the proposals were being discussed. Management flatly rejected this



suggestion and made it known soon afterwards that certain changes in working practices would have to be agreed before a return to work was ever allowed.

The precise changes being sought by the Company were set out in a letter dated January 19th, which made it clear to all employees that they could return to work if they were willing to abide by the set of conditions laid out in an accompanying document, "The Terms of Resumption" (known, thereafter, as "The 9-Point Plan"). The exact wording of this document is given in Appendix VI(iv), but its main points were as follows: the Company required full cooperation in implementing the redundancy programme notified to the Trade Union during negotiations (on January 16th); this exercise must be completed by April 18th, otherwise compulsory redundancies would be made; there would be greater labour mobility (including the crossing of existing demarcation lines); some weekend overtime was to be eliminated; outside cleaning and engineering contractors were to be introduced; and, finally, there was to be no victimisation or blacking of plant and equipment once employees returned to work.

Two days later, each employee received a further letter from Management, comprising a detailed statement of the Company's case (see Appendix V(v)). It was alleged in the letter that shop stewards had deliberately "obstructed" the work of the Independent Manpower Committee, with the result that the necessary scale of economies was not achieved. This prompted the need for the four-day week - something which was allowed for in the existing Contracts of Employment.

It was further emphasized in the letter that the loss of barrelage caused by strike action had precipitated a need for even greater economies and that the question of more redundancies had been raised in discussions with Trade Union representatives. The Company's

aim had been to achieve the redundancies on a voluntary basis but, due to a lack of cooperation by union officers, compulsory notices had now been sent out to a number of employees. (Appendix VI(iii)). The letter concluded with the stark message that the longer the strike continued, the greater would be the need for even more redundancies.

With hindsight, it now seems reasonable to speculate that this message was intended as a "softener" for a subsequent letter which arrived on the following day. (Appendix VI(vi)). This letter reiterated that an immediate resumption of production was necessary to check the heavy loss of trade due to the strike. It was emphasised that the Company required certain groups of workers to return to work on the following Monday. Failing this, they would be served with dismissal notices for "breach of contract". Employees were told that, should this situation arise, they would receive offers of re-engagement, but that the terms of acceptance would exclude Earnings Protection and guaranteed bonus in Traffic. If these offers were rejected, Ansells would recruit substitute labour. However, later that day a new development arose when Management threatened the possibility of closure if the strike continued (Birmingham Post, January 24th, 1981), a theme which they reiterated during the next few days.

When the desired resumption of work failed to materialise, Ansells issued dismissal notices, dated January 27th, 1981, to all hourly-paid workers. (Appendix VI(vii)). Against this background, a mass meeting was arranged, the outcome of which was a decision to continue the stoppage. In the meantime, Ansells sent out letters of re-engagement to all employees, offering them their previous jobs, but on modified terms. (Appendix VI(viii)). Only 28 out of the 1,000+ strikers replied to the Company in acceptance of the offer, prompting an announcement by Management that they would recruit workers from the dole queue.

Clerical (i.e., "staff") members of the A.C.T.S.S. working inside

the brewery (who, without being directly involved in the strike, were, nevertheless, supportive of their hourly-paid colleagues) responded by saying that they would refuse to process any applications by potential replacements. Pickets also began to assemble outside the brewery entrance, making it clear that no applicants would be allowed to cross their picket line, and, on February 4th, the T.G.W.U. declared the strike "official".

However, all this appeared to count for nothing when, on February 9th, Allied Breweries announced the closure of their Birmingham brewery. An official Press Release gave the following reasons for this historic decision:

"The Birmingham brewery has suffered from recurring industrial conflict for many years and, for many months, Management have been trying to impress upon the workforce the need for major cost-saving to make the brewery profitable. In view of the T.G.W.U. refusal to consider changes in working practices, which are essential to the profitable operation of the brewery, Allied have decided that they cannot continue to sustain major losses with such little prospect for improvement." (E.G., The Guardian, February 10th, 1981).

At a Management press conference held at the brewery, both the Ansells Chairman, Robin Thompson, and Allied's Vice-chairman, Sir Derrick Holden-Brown, were at pains to point out that Ansells had been left with no option other than to close the brewery. (ibid). They explained how it was the Company's practice to split off profits made by the production of beer from profits accrued from sales. Thus, although Ansells as a whole made a £16 million profit for the year ended March, 1980, the actual brewery (or production unit) lost £1.8 million across the same period. It had been estimated that, even without the strike, the brewery was heading towards a £2 million deficit for the current financial year.

Furthermore, Ansells was the most expensive division of Allied

Breweries per unit of production - all the more reason why it was necessary, in the face of a sharp downturn in the beer market, to accept the need for rationalization. Given the reality that only a handful of their employees were willing to accept the terms of re-engagement, Allied had opted to permanently close the brewery. The decision to close was communicated to employees in the form of a letter, dated February 9th, 1981. (Appendix VI(ix)). It was disclosed that a number of jobs were still available to ex-employees at the distribution depots, and that ex-gratia payments would be made to non-returning workers.

#### 5.2. Part 2 of the Strike: Attempts to Re-open the Brewery.

Only a matter of hours after the closure was first announced on independent local radio, a mass meeting of the Ansell's strikers was convened at their social club/strike "headquarters" in Perry Barr, Birmingham. At this meeting,\* the Branch Chairman and the T.G.W.U.'s District Secretary managed, jointly, to convince their members that, in spite of Management's claims to the contrary, the decision to "close" the brewery was little more than a transparent bluff. It was agreed that the strikers' main objective should be to put even greater pressure on Ansell's to re-open as soon as possible and return to work on pre-strike conditions of employment.

Five days later, a further mass meeting was held at Digbeth Town Hall, at which the strikers reaffirmed their commitment to the strike. This was in spite of the fact that, in addressing the strikers, the Regional and Divisional Secretaries of the T.G.W.U. (Brian Mathers and Douglas Fairbairn) each emphasised the unlikelihood of success.

(\*Researcher was present at this and all subsequent mass meetings).

Table 5.2. A Diary of the Strike. Part Two.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nature of Activity or Event.</u>
February, cont.	
14.2.81.	Mass meeting. Men vote to continue strike. Regional and Divisional Secretaries (T.G.W.U.) express doubts regarding chances of success, but promise "full backing" of union.
26.2.81.	Delegation of Ansell's strikers lobby Members of Parliament in Westminster.
March	
4.3.81.	Ansell's organize a secret ballot, asking employees to choose between ex-gratia payments and continuing strike (in which case offer of payment and jobs at distribution depots would be withdrawn). However, project abandoned due to alleged interference by shop stewards.
6.3.81.	Mass meeting of Ansell's pub landlords (members of A.C.T.S.S.). T.G.W.U.'s Divisional Secretary condemns above behaviour by shop stewards. Tells landlords that they must decide individually whether to support the strike.
13.3.81.	Birmingham City Councillors fail to persuade Ansell's to re-open brewery.
17.3.81.	5 Midlands M.P.s fail in similar attempt.
27.3.81.	T.G.W.U. National Delegates Conference held in Birmingham. Romford delegate does not attend. Ansell's "flying pickets" despatched to Romford.
April	
8.4.81.	Talks at A.C.A.S.. Union delegation led by Alex Kitson (Acting General Secretary, T.G.W.U.) fails to persuade Company to change its mind.

Continues...

17.4.81.

Mass meeting. Despite failure of talks at A.C.A.S.,  
workers vote to continue strike.

When the vote was taken, there was an overwhelming show of hands (only three abstentions) in favour of staying on strike. Having been left in no doubt as to the feelings of the Ansell's strikers, the full-time officers increased their popularity somewhat by promising the 5 /377 Branch the "full backing" of the T.G.W.U..

From this point forward, attempts to pressurise the Company into re-opening progressed along two main lines. First, efforts were made to cut off supplies of beer entering the Ansell's trading estate, so as to inflict serious economic harm on the Company; and, second, an attempt was made to enlist the support of local M.P.s and City Councillors, who tried to persuade Ansell's Directors that it was "irresponsible" of them to close the brewery.

With regard to the latter activity, a deputation of Ansell's strikers travelled to the House of Commons (on February 26th) to lobby M.P.s. The upshot of this was that a delegation of Labour M.P.s, led by Julius Silverman, the Member for Erdington, met with senior Company Executives on March 17th to persuade them to rescind their decision. Four days earlier, a group of City Councillors had made a similar approach, though without any success, and this latest initiative proved equally abortive.

In the meantime, picketing activities were concentrated, primarily, on the Ansell's brewery and distribution depots, the aim being to prevent the distribution of existing stocks to public houses in the Midlands and South Wales. However, this was not to bargain for the fact that the Company would still manage to obtain supplies via a network of independent wholesalers. Hence, it soon became necessary to picket individual pubs as well as the agencies supplying them.

Progress in this direction was hampered by the surprising events at a mass meeting of Ansell's landlords (members of the

A.C.T.S.S.), addressed by Douglas Fairbairn, the T.G.W.U.'s Divisional Secretary. Prior to the meeting (which occurred on March 6th), the majority of these publicans had diligently obeyed an A.C.T.S.S. directive calling for them to allow stocks of beer to run down without attempting to replenish them. Now, however, Fairbairn advised the landlords that it was "purely a matter for their own conscience" as to whether they supported the strike, and told them to contact him personally should they experience any difficulty in obtaining fresh beer supplies.

Two days earlier (i.e., on March 4th), Management had tried to ballot the workforce as to whether they wanted to stay on strike or accept a revised Company offer regarding jobs and compensation (see Appendix VI(x)), but the project was abandoned amidst allegations of shop steward interference in the voting procedure. The Ansell strikers were particularly disturbed to learn that, in addressing the A.C.T.S.S. members, Fairbairn also expressed his personal criticism of the shop stewards' behaviour. Patently, as far as they were concerned, this did not suggest wholehearted commitment on his part.

The strikers encountered further problems later in March when intelligence obtained by their "reconnaissance squads" showed that beer was being trunked into the Midlands area from other Allied production units, notably the Ind Coope brewery in Romford. Clearly, some measure had to be taken to stem this influx.

Consequently, a meeting was held in Birmingham on March 27th of T.G.W.U. Delegates from throughout Allied Breweries. Ostensibly, the outcome of the meeting was very much in the Ansell strikers' favour since the following resolution was unanimously accepted:

"That this Delegates Conference representing T.G.W.U. members employed in Allied Breweries (U.K.) declares its support for our colleagues involved in the strike in the Birmingham location. It is our intention to do



all that is possible to see that beers brewed at our various locations will not find their way into the Ansell's, Birmingham, Tied Trade accounts via wholesalers or otherwise. We pledge that every effort will be made to ensure that beers are not supplied into the two Ansell's depots known as Gravelly Park and Aldridge, and we will take all possible steps to see that our beers do not come through wholesalers or otherwise into the aforementioned depots until the dispute is resolved."

However, conspicuous by his absence from the Delegates Conference was the Romford representative who, despite receiving an invitation well in advance, made hurried excuses not to attend. Consequently, even as the Conference in session, Ansell's "flying pickets" were already assembling outside the Ind Coope complex in North London.

In fact, the Ansell's pickets were given a very frosty reception by their southern counterparts. On the day of their arrival, a local Romford Newspaper (the "Romford and Hornchurch Recorder") gave front-page prominence to a quote from the brewery's shop steward convener who made no attempt to disguise his true feelings:

"I have 1,580 workers at this brewery and it is their jobs I am concerned about. These pickets have no right to turn people away. Their dispute is not official down here. They are secondary picketing and they are trespassing. What they are doing is illegal. It is our people's future they are taking away. If we didn't supply the wholesalers they would go to another brewery, and once we start losing orders, we start losing jobs."

For this reason above all others, the secondary picketing of the Romford brewery had no discernible effect (though, for reasons that will later become apparent, the failure of the operation was not communicated to colleagues remaining in Birmingham). However, the strike action was greatly encouraged by the personal intervention of Mr. Alex Kitson, the T.G.W.U.'s Acting General Secretary, who met with Allied Breweries Executives at the Birmingham offices of A.C.A.S.

on April 8th for discussions about the strike. Nevertheless, the optimism with which Kitson's initiative had been greeted soon turned into disappointment for the strikers.

The discussions at A.C.A.S. were short-lived and, once they had broken down, local radio broadcasts reported that the Acting General Secretary now conceded that the closure was irrevocable. Two days later, Management issued a circular stating that, of the T.G.W.U. officers present at A.C.A.S., all but the District Secretary now accepted the Company's decision as "final". Nevertheless, at a mass meeting on April 17th, the Branch Chairman and the District Secretary persuaded their members that Kitson's position had been seriously misrepresented, and that Management's claims amounted to "wishful thinking". Thus, when the vote was taken, it once again registered a clear show of hands in favour of continuing the strike.

### 5.3. Part 3 of the Strike: How the Strike was De-mobilised.

In the face of this stubborn resistance on the part of their workforce, Ansell's Management finally appeared to lose their patience, and adopted an altogether more aggressive posture. On April 22nd, letters were sent out to all industrial employees warning them that if the Company had not received sufficient applications for the 300 jobs that were available at its two distribution depots by April 30th, all existing vacancies at Aldridge and Gravelly Park, and all offers of financial compensation would be permanently withdrawn. (Appendix VI(vi)).

This letter had an invigorating effect on the workforce. Within days, Ansell's announced that they were lifting the deadline since 966 strikers had replied to their ultimatum. The strike

Table 5.3. A Diary of the Strike. Part Three.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nature of Activity or Event.</u>
April, cont.	
22.4.81.	Ansells send out letters to all strikers informing them of April 30th deadline, by which time sufficient numbers of ex-employees must have applied for jobs at depots, otherwise existing vacancies plus offer of compensation would be withdrawn.
29.4.81.	Deadline withdrawn. Sufficient applications received.
May	
1.5.81.	Company rejects union proposal to convert brewery into a Worker Cooperative.
12.5.81.	Regional Secretary ballots Ansells membership (without first obtaining Branch Committee's formal consent) regarding choice between continuing strike or establishing negotiated settlement. Of 702 votes cast (roughly 65% of workforce), 688 are in favour of negotiated settlement.
13.5.81.	Mass meeting overturns result of ballot: strike continues.
19.5.81.	Mass meeting. Employees decide to hold out for "substantial improvements" on Company's offer.
21.5.81.	Ansells set new deadline (May 28th) for acceptance of jobs.
27.5.81.	Jobs deadline extended to allow discussions between Management and Trade Union representatives.
30.5.81.	Penultimate mass meeting of strike takes place in presence of T.G.W.U.'s Territorial Representative.

Continues...

June

- 2.6.81. Distribution depots scheduled to re-open, but stay closed due to effects of mass picketing.
- 3.6.81. New agreement reached for method of dealing with applications for future vacancies.
- 4.6.81. T.G.W.U. National Executive Council withdraws official status of strike.
- 6.6.81. Mass meeting. Formal vote to end strike. Those dismissed to receive ex-gratia payments; told that they will be considered for future vacancies at the brewery.

leaders pointed out that the high response was a calculated move to avert the possibility of offers being withdrawn. Management responded with the announcement that they now required the distribution depots to be re-opened by May 20th, otherwise the existing offers of jobs and ex-gratia payments would be withdrawn.

In the meantime, secondary picketing activities had been resumed at Romford and was now also taking place at Ind Coope's Midlands brewery at Burton-on-Trent. In both cases the exercise proved totally ineffective, and there was a growing tendency to blame the T.G.W.U.'s Regional and Divisional Secretaries (but not the District Secretary), not only for refusing to issue a directive to lorry drivers not to cross Ansell's picket lines, but also for engaging in certain clandestine activities that seemed "designed" to break the strike.

Ansell's pickets in Burton suffered a particularly disturbing experience when the driver of a C.O.2 gas wagon produced a list of T.G.W.U. officials who could be contacted by outside contractors to obtain permission to cross Ansell's picket lines. Included on that list was the name of Douglas Fairbairn (i.e., the Divisional Secretary).

The Ansell's Branch Committee contacted Mr. Fairbairn at once and, although a full letter of explanation was received in reply (see Appendix VII(i)), little credence was given to his claim of innocence. The Branch Committee considered it far more important, from a tactical point of view, to obtain a letter from the Regional Secretary, confirming that the dispute was official outside of the Birmingham area and that picket lines, therefore, should not be crossed.

They soon learned, however, that Mr. Mathers was being deliberately ambiguous in the wording of his replies to trade union officials seeking written clarification as to the status of the dispute. This is evident in a letter sent by Mathers to the Burton Branch Chairman (see Appendix VII(ii)), the precise effect of which was to provide all lorry drivers with the necessary leeway to break the picket line.

On hearing of this, the Branch Committee tried to make an appointment to talk to the Regional Secretary directly. When excuses were made on his behalf, a group of Ansell's pickets immediately occupied the Union's Regional Offices in West Bromwich and interviewed Mr. Mathers about the T.G.W.U.'s role in the strike.

The Regional Secretary's explanation for his Union's apparent diffidence was that the T.G.W.U. was afraid to become involved in a national confrontation with Allied Breweries lest the Company should serve them with a damaging injunction under the 1980 Employment Act. This was a legal sanction which, if it was allowed to run to its natural conclusion, might feasibly end in the total bankruptcy of the Union. Unimpressed by this excuse, the pickets finally departed, still unaware that Mr. Mathers was secretly completing his preparations to ballot the Ansell's workforce.

At this stage of the strike negotiations between Ansell's Management and the T.G.W.U. (represented by Mathers, Fairbairn and Austin) were making no headway at all. The District Secretary, Terry Austin, had even suggested that the brewery be allowed to run as a worker cooperative for a trial period, but this proposal was rejected.

It was against this background that each striker received a ballot paper on May 6th, asking him to indicate his preference between a negotiated settlement or a protraction of the dispute.

This paper was accompanied by two letters, one from the Regional Secretary and the other from the T.G.W.U.'s National Legal Secretary, both of which clearly endeavoured to convince the strikers of the futility of continuing their stoppage. (Appendix VII(iii)).

The results of the ballot were quickly published, revealing that of the 702 strikers exercising the right to vote, 688 stated a preference for a negotiated settlement, whereas a mere 14 voted to stay on strike. This was a severe blow to the strike leaders who realised, perhaps for the first time in the dispute, that the T.G.W.U. were not wholeheartedly supportive of the strike, and that the commitment of their own members had significantly declined.

However, at a hastily-arranged mass meeting held on May 13th, the Branch Chairman and the District Secretary (the only full-time officer the rank-and-file still trusted) impressed upon the strikers that the other branches within Allied Breweries were finally prepared to help the Ansell workers achieve the more "realistic" objective of securing improvements to the number of jobs and the size of the ex-gratia payments on offer. Thus, whilst acknowledging that the brewery was finally closed, the Ansell strikers considered it beneficial to their interests to stay out on strike. This decision was reaffirmed at a subsequent mass meeting held six days later.

Whilst further negotiations took place between representatives of Ansell and the T.G.W.U., successful applicants for the jobs on offer at the distribution depots received letters informing them of their new terms and conditions of employment. Meanwhile, unsuccessful applicants received written confirmation that the ex-gratia payments were to be awarded on the following basis: £1,000 for up to two year's service prior to January 30th, 1981; and an additional amount for continuous service after two years, calculated according to a

sliding scale. (See Appendix VI(xii)). As it transpired, these were the terms finally accepted by the Union as the basis of a settlement.

The final two weeks of the strike consisted of an attempt by the rank-and-file to stay out sufficiently long enough for their negotiators to secure improvements on the Company's offer. It was within this context that one of the most crucial mass meetings of the strike took place (on May 30th). This meeting was attended by the local Territorial Representative on the T.G.W.U.'s National Executive Council (a body made up of entirely of lay officers and not full-time appointees). The presence of this esteemed guest had been prompted by a recent announcement that the Regional Secretary was seeking the appropriate authority to withdraw all strike pay. He assured the Ansell strikers that the question of how best to serve the dispute would be put on the agenda for N.E.C. discussions to be held in London over the next few days.

Whilst these discussions were in progress, the mass picketing of Aldridge and Gravelly Park ensured that the scheduled resumption of work at the two distribution depots (set for June 2nd) did not materialise. Meanwhile, it was disclosed that, in negotiations between Ansell and the T.G.W.U., Management had conceded that ex-employees (i.e., striking workers) would be allowed to fill any future vacancies arising at the brewery on the basis of length of service. The District Secretary had been concerned that a previously-proposed method would allow the Company to overlook shop stewards. However, the revised method was considered far more equitable all round. Ironically, on hearing of this concession, the N.E.C. took the view that there was little more to be achieved by prolonging the strike and took the step of lifting the official status of the dispute.

The final mass meeting of the strike took place at Digbeth Town



Hall on June 6th, when the brewery workers formally voted to terminate their stoppage. It was an emotional meeting containing many references to the T.G.W.U.'s "betrayal" of the Ansell's strikers. Indeed, it was left to the District Secretary (a man who, by his own commitment to the strike, was set apart from his more senior colleagues) to pledge that he would demand a top level enquiry into the handling of the dispute in the hope that the outcome might publically embarrass the Union.

## CHAPTER SIX. THE DECISION TO STRIKE.

Strike action typically stems from a process whereby the cognitions of those involved are structured into a consensual definition of the situation that industrial action is appropriate. This chapter will show how the situation was defined in such a way as to make opposition to the Company's proposals for change seem imperative, why the threatened closure of the brewery was widely dismissed as bluff and why the workers were so confident of the prospect of winning the strike.

The chapter begins with a brief assessment of the influence of the strike leaders on rank-and-file attitudes and beliefs and concludes with an evaluation of all major aspects of judgement and decision-making occurring at the outset of the strike.

### 6.1. The Influence of the Strike Leaders.

As we stated in Chapter One, individual reputations have an important bearing on the degree to which persuasive arguments gain widespread acceptance within the workgroup. Of obvious significance during the Ansells strike was the stature of the Branch Chairman, Ken Bradley. Such were Mr. Bradley's undoubted skills as a negotiator and public speaker, and so impressive was his record as an elected representative, that faith in his personal diagnosis of any situation was usually paramount. Bradley had served as Branch Chairman since unionization in 1959, an achievement which said much for his own proficiency as well as the trust invested in him by others.

Alongside Ken Bradley, the influence of the District Secretary, Terry Austin, was almost as powerful. A much younger man, Mr. Austin was a former Ansells employee, having been very active in trade union affairs at the brewery where he was acknowledged as Ken Bradley's protege. Austin showed many of the negotiating and oratorical skills of his mentor and, when the Branch Chairman declined to accept the position of District Secretary, he recommended the younger man in his place. However, Austin's first loyalties remained to the Ansells workers and not to the T.G.W.U. "establishment," per se. He was the individual whom the workforce backed up in the "shop steward strike" of 1963. Such actions engender mutual feelings of trust and affection and, long after his appointment as District Secretary, he continued to be regarded as "one of the family".

The relationship between Austin and Bradley was especially significant. For, although Austin held the more senior position within the T.G.W.U., Bradley's continued dominance of the partnership ( a legacy of their previous father-son relationship) ensured that all union matters relating to the brewery were referred back to him. Indeed, Austin was not embarrassed by his own admission that "I've always been Field Commander to Ken Bradley's General In Chief." (Personal Communication).

Of the remaining Branch officers, the Vice-chairman, Matt Folarin, and the Branch Secretary, Joe Bond, were also influential, albeit to a lesser extent than the more charismatic figures of Bradley and Austin. Folarin had been employed at the brewery for 22 years. With his halting, Nigerian accent, the Vice-chairman lacked the oratorical skill of his colleagues, but this was compensated for by his undoubted wisdom as a negotiator and strike strategist. Joe Bond was quieter and more reserved than the others, but his scholarly

attitude towards agreements and procedures earned him the respect of the Branch membership.

Renowned tactical expertise was a quality also possessed by the small group of senior shop stewards who, along with the Branch Committee and District Secretary, comprised the "informal cabinet" of people responsible for tactical decision-making during the strike. Of lesser significance was the role of the more junior shop stewards and strike activists whose influence was mainly derived from regular contact with the strike leaders.

The significance of interpersonal influence will become increasingly more apparent as we begin to examine the key aspects of judgement upon which the 1981 Ansell's strike was based.

## 6.2. Interpreting the Situation (I): "Union Busting".

### (a) Opposition to the four-day week.

One may recall that the Ansell's dispute was precipitated by disciplinary action against a group of production workers who were accused of deliberately obstructing the implementation of the four-day working week. Such action was not, however, the underlying cause of the strike. As Batstone et al. (1978:p45) explain, "A dispute may be sparked off by disciplinary action on the part of management. But this may arise directly out of an issue concerning working arrangements or the systems of payment."

It is, therefore, useful to distinguish, at this stage, between the trigger, issue and demand. (Kelly and Nicholson, 1980). Thus, the trigger for the Ansell's strike was the "critical incident" involving the sending home of the men; the main issue was whether Management should be allowed to impose the four-day week on the workforce; and the demand was for an immediate return to the normal working week. Of

the three, the issue therefore corresponded to how the situation was defined.

This definition was formulated at the mass meeting of January 14th, when both the Branch Chairman and the District Secretary impressed upon their members that Management were dishonouring the agreement guaranteeing employees a five-day working week. They pointed out that, although Management were entitled to give seven days' notice of withdrawal of the guaranteed week in the event of a serious decline in the amount of work available, there had not been a sufficient fall in demand to warrant this unprecedented measure.

Their principal concern, however, was with the probable consequences of Management being allowed to "get away with their autocratic behaviour" in unilaterally withdrawing the four-day week without first consulting the shop stewards. As the District Secretary later explained to the Press:

"The men felt very strongly that if they allowed a reduction in the working week this time, it would become a regular event. We have an agreement with Management which guarantees us a minimum working week and that has been broken. We, of course, accept that Management has a right to manage, but it does not have a right to behave like a complete autocrat."  
(Sunday Mercury, January 18th, 1981).

The purely practical effect of this argument was to establish in the workers' minds a "vision" of the undesirable consequences arising from any failure on their part to react decisively. Had strike action been defined as straightforward opposition to the four-day week, the men may have responded less energetically (seeing less justification for their action in light of the sacrifices being made by thousands of other workers in the region). To claim, however, that their principal concern was one of self-defence (both now and in the future) was to nominate an "acceptable" motive for going on strike.

This example is a testimony to the crucial role played by language in the so-called "management of meaning". (Pettigrew, 1977).

At least one author has characterised language as a form of ~~language~~ technology:

"The idea of language as a technology carries with it two important implications. The first is that a technology is a method by which to shape or fashion things... The second is that, as a technology, there arises the question of its becoming obsolete." (Corcoran, 1979:p8).

Clearly, there is always a possibility that, when new events suddenly occur putting an entirely different complexion on matters, the existing definition may have to be replaced by a more adequate interpretation of reality. This was the case during the Ansells strike when Management made the surprising announcement that the return to work was conditional upon the acceptance of revised working practices and additional compulsory redundancies, backing up this ultimatum with threats to sack the workers and close the brewery. This new turn of events called for an entirely novel definition of the situation: one capable of putting an end to the uncertainty that was rapidly starting to spread.

(b) The B.L. script.

From the moment that Management delivered their ultimata to the end of the dispute, conceptions of Ansells' motives were represented by a single cognitive schema which we may conveniently refer to as the "B.L. script". Evidence of its pervasiveness could be heard in the form of everyday slogans permeating picket line discussions: "The Company are doing 'a Michael Edwardes' on us"; "The bastards are 'doing a B.L.'."

The same analogy was evoked in letters to trade unionists which pointed out that the Directors were: "introducing car industry tactics and certainly wanted to administer a large dose of the Michael Edwardes medicine to our members." (Source: Trade Union correspondence). Finally,

a similar theme was also contained in local newspaper articles about the strike. One reporter told her readers how:

"The workers seem convinced Management is deliberately trying to ape Sir Michael Edwardes' tactics in reducing union power by threatening closure and appealing to the workforce over the heads of the shop stewards." (Birmingham Post, February 10th, 1981).

The significance of the script in terms of the Ansell's workers' decision to prolong their strike and ignore the Company's threat of closure cannot be overestimated. For this reason, it is imperative that we understand the precise basis of comparison between Ansell's and B.L. in order to appreciate why the analogy aroused such high emotions and an insatiable appetite for confrontation.

The definition of the situation in terms of the B.L. script did not simply "materialise". Rather, in line with predictions set out in Chapter One, a process of social influence occurred whereby the seminal insights of a handful of individuals were internalised by the whole group.

According to his own testimony (Personal Communication), it was the District Secretary, Terry Austin, who was first struck by the similarity between events at Ansell's and B.L.. Austin then raised this matter in the context of discussions among the "informal cabinet" referred to earlier. We can assume that the analogy became more persuasive as other individuals observed some similarities that had hitherto gone unnoticed. It is equally possible that other members of the Branch Committee, the shop steward movement or, indeed, the rank-and-file were also beginning to conceive of events in terms of the B.L. script, and that social reinforcement was provided by this pleasing convergence of views.

There are several obvious reasons why the B.L. script should have become established as the popular definition of the

situation. It was pointed out in Chapter One that cognitive scripts are usually applied according to two criteria: first, there must be fundamental similarities between the situations being compared (Kahnemann and Tversky, 1972); and second, the script concerned must be memorable and easily brought to mind. (Tversky and Kahnemann, 1973).

With regard to the former criterion, it is evident that the two situations resembled each other in terms of such similarities as:-

(i) The "aggressive" style of management favoured by both companies.

Ansells and B.L. each resorted to threats of dismissal and closure of the company in order to push through redundancy programmes and impose stricter working practices.

(ii) A willingness by the directors of both companies to go "over the heads" of elected trade union representatives in their dealings with the rank-and-file. Ansells and B.L. each broke off negotiations with trade union officers and presented their offers directly to their employees on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis.

(iii) The treatment of elected trade union officers. It was announced just after the outbreak of the Ansells strike that Management were refusing to have any more dealings with members of the Branch Committee and that, henceforward, they would only enter into negotiations with full-time officers of the T.G.W.U.. This prompted allegations of victimisation and the drawing of comparisons with the treatment of Derek Robinson at B.L..

(iv) The content and style of the B.L. Draft Agreement (known by B.L. workers as the "Slaves' Charter) and Ansells' "9-Point Plan".

Compare the changes proposed in the former (page80, Chapter Three)



with the implications of the latter, which were spelled out as follows by Gareth Jones of the Birmingham Evening Mail:

"The measures demanded by Ansells mean fundamental and far-reaching changes and include:

- . Sweeping away guaranteed overtime and earnings protection which would mean a drop in pay of more than £40.
- . Scrapping long-established working practices and introducing complete mobility of labour. That would mean crossing demarcation lines.
- . Axing almost 100 jobs despite workers' claims that an independent manning commission ruled it was not necessary.
- . Sacking maintenance workers and putting the jobs out to contract.
- . Ending the rights of union officials to argue manning and work loads."

(Birmingham Evening Mail 'News Extra', February 4th, 1981; see also Appendix VI(iv) for literal version of 9-Point Plan).

We can, therefore, conclude that fundamental similarities existed between the situations at Ansells and B.L..

Regarding the second criterion, Nisbett and Ross(1980:p45) make the point that information is likely to be more memorable (and, therefore, more "available") to the extent that it is vivid. These authors describe as "vivid" any information that is:

"...likely to attract and to hold our attention and to excite the imagination to the extent that it is (a) emotionally interesting, (b) concrete and imagery provoking, and (c) proximate in a sensory, temporary or spatial way."

On this basis, there are obvious reasons why the B.L. script was applied. For example, events at the motor car company were relatively recent (1979/80); they took place within close geographical proximity of the brewery, sometimes involving friends and neighbours of the Ansells workers; there was extensive local media coverage of activities at the company; and, finally, it was an important coincidence that the Ansells workers' own union (the T.G.W.U.) were heavily involved

in affairs at B.L..

We should recognise that many of the "source effects" mentioned in Section 6.1. of this chapter had an important bearing on the perceived validity of the B.L. script. For example, the reputation of the District Secretary was clearly significant since he was accredited with providing the initial insight. It is equally likely, however, that the Branch Chairman's endorsement of the script profoundly encouraged its widespread acceptance.

Another contributory factor, here, may have been the distrustful relationship between Ansell's and their employees. In Chapter One, we characterised a low-trust relationship as involving suspicion and deception, the breaking of agreements, frequent resort to threat and attempts to "get one over" on the opposition. On this basis, many areas of conflict discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four, such as the Fox and Goose Affair, the disagreement over pub swaps, the "shop stewards witch hunt" and the unwillingness to cooperate with the Manning Commission, are obvious manifestations of distrust.

As previously argued, attributions of ulterior motive are more likely to be accepted as valid when the workers are strongly inclined to see management as untrustworthy. This helps to explain why both the original argument concerning the danger of allowing Management to impose the four-day week, and the subsequent assertion that the Company were doing "another B.L." had such a persuasive impact.

Turning, now, to the implications of the B.L. script, it was evident that each Ansell's worker was aware of the circumstances that had existed at B.L. since the defeat of the unions. According to legend, Management's domination was now so complete that "grown men are behaving like schoolboys". Clearly, the brewery workers would do their utmost to avoid a similar situation at Ansell's.

However, the most far-reaching implication of the script was

that, if Allied Breweries were intent upon adopting the B.L. strategy of bludgeoning the unions into submission, then their dispute symbolized nothing less than a "life-or-death" struggle for the survival of trade union organization throughout the Beer Division. Should the Ansells workers be defeated, Allied's directors would follow in Sir Michael Edwardes' footsteps by using their victory as a springboard to the next in their insatiable drive to "break" the unions.

This type of reasoning was evident in letters evoking the support of fellow Allied Breweries workers. Consider the following extracts:

"Ansell's management is clearly trying to be the Michael Edwardes of our industry, both in job reductions and the destruction of trade union organization. Our fight to keep Ansell's open is not just a question of saving our jobs. For us it is a matter of trying to stop our employers going through trade union organization like a dose of salts."

"Ansell's have systematically tried to crush the trade union organization at Aston. They have used tactics learned from Michael Edwardes. Allied Breweries are a huge multinational with vast resources. If they can succeed at Ansell's, they will use their victory as an iron rod for the rest of their workforce. This is why we cannot see this fight as a local issue concerning only Ansell's workers."

(Source: Trade Union correspondence).

The principal achievement of the B.L. script was to link a persuasive interpretation of events to deeply-ingrained values held in common by the workforce. If the "chronic conflict" of the late-1970s had taught the Ansell's workers anything, it was to appreciate the worth of a strong, defiant trade union organization dedicated to the defence of such important principles as job protection and worker autonomy and control. As we pointed out in Chapter One, such values tend to be inculcated, partly as a result of personal involvement in

episodes of industrial conflict, and partly as a consequence of the socialisation process. (Fox, 1971).

Peters' (1978) concept of the 5-9 year life-cycle of dominating values may also help us to appreciate the determination with which the Ansell workers were prepared to defy the Company. We saw in Chapters Two, Three and Four how the recent history of industrial relations at the brewery was marked by a period of cooperation (roughly, between 1972 and 1974), followed by a period of chronic conflict, lasting from 1975 to the 1981 dispute itself.

Figure 4 represents a possible transformation in dominant workplace values (i.e., from a cooperative to a confrontational orientation towards industrial relations) in terms of Peters' model. It can be seen that, in each case, a shift in the dominant value was brought about by a major strike (in November, 1971, and October/November, 1975, respectively). It is not yet clear why the value orientations precipitated by these strikes were so qualitatively different. Two possible reasons may be: (a) the greater length and "bitterness" of the 1975 strike; and (b) a greater unwillingness to trust Management due to ongoing conflict concerning the Fox and Goose Affair.

The above analysis is highly speculative but, if correct, could help to explain the tenacity with which the employees resisted Management's drive for greater efficiency: the key point being that the 1981 dispute occurred during a period when the value for confrontation was most dominant. Given the nature of the popular interpretation of events allied to the pervasiveness of these powerful workplace values, it is little wonder that the whole affair became something more than "just a strike": for those involved, the 1981 Ansell dispute assumed all the significance of an industrial holy war.



### 6.3. Interpreting the Situation (II): Calling the Company's Bluff.

When Ansell's first threatened to close the brewery unless the workers called off their strike, a small section of the workforce (consisting primarily of older employees) were prepared to take them seriously. Such people held the cynical belief that, in closing the brewery, Allied would finally be realising a goal that had so far eluded them for almost two decades. This premise was largely based on what happened at Atkinsons Brewery in 1963 when production was terminated shortly after they were taken over by "M and B". Fears that Allied Breweries were perpetrating "Another Atkinsons" therefore caused some consternation among those old enough to remember it.

However, as we previously pointed out, continued investment in the brewery in recent years appeared to consolidate Ansell's long-term future. Most workers were persuaded by the argument that Allied Breweries were unlikely to close down an enterprise that had recently received millions of pounds worth of investment.

Besides this, there was an even more compelling argument to suggest that Ansell's were bluffing - based on a highly salient cognitive script. This related to a similar situation during the 1980 wage dispute when Management threatened to close the brewery if the employees went through with their strike. It may be recalled that the workers defied this ultimatum but that the Company backed down. Based on this knowledge, the workforce was inclined to regard this latest threat as a transparent coercive bluff.

This, then, was where Management's position was radically different to that of their B.L. counterparts. During his brief tenure at B.L., Sir Michael Edwardes had tried hard to restore the loss of credibility suffered by his predecessors: "In September 1978 he threatened to cut, irrevocably, £32 million of investment at Bathgate

unless a return to work took place. A worker there, reflecting his reaction based on earlier empty threats, commented 'Michael Edwardes is talking through a whole in his head.' The next day the cut was made and over 1,000 jobs permanently lost." (Dunnett, 1980:p160). The impact of this move was felt so profoundly that, "When, in September 1979, Edwardes threatened to cut the whole volume car division of B.L. if a full strike was called, no strike took place..." (ibid). Unlike B.L., Ansell's had done nothing to re-establish their credibility since the 1980 dispute; hence, the crucial difference.

This impression that Management were bluffing was sustained even when they announced the permanent closure of the brewery on February 9th. The Branch Vice-chairman boldly asserted that "this is yet another Management attempt to intimidate us. We are still convinced they will back down and we will be able to go back to work on our terms." (Sandwell Express and Star, February 10th, 1981).

The Ansell's Press Secretary was amazed that the Vice-chairman could ever have arrived at this conclusion:

"If he thinks that the Vice-chairman of Allied Breweries, Sir Derrick Holden-Brown, comes all the way to Birmingham to indulge in a game of bluff, then he really must think the moon is made of blue cheese. The astonishing thing is that anyone can still believe that Management is bluffing." (ibid).

Part of the reason why the workers continued to believe that Management were bluffing was because the announcement of closure had the appearance of another B.L.-style ploy to scare the workforce into submission. However, a second, more compelling reason was presented to the men at a mass meeting held directly after the closure announcement. Ken Bradley and Terry Austin took it in turn to remind their members of a similar situation that arose at Ansell's "sister" brewery in the Spring of 1979.

We saw in Chapter Three how, under broadly comparable circum-

stances, Allied Breweries literally closed down their Tetley Walker brewery in Warrington during a strike by 700 production and distribution workers (all members of the T.G.W.U.), only to resume production once a settlement was reached. This "Warrington script" encouraged the view that Allied were using the threat of closure in the same way that it had been employed two years earlier: to pressurise their employees into abandoning their strike.

Based on our earlier discussion regarding the criteria by which cognitive scripts are applied, one can imagine why the "closure scripts" of 1979 and 1980 became established as persuasive definitions of the situation. Fundamental similarities existed between the situations being compared. Moreover, the scripts were based on relatively recent events involving, in one case, the Ansell's workers themselves and, in the other case, a comparable work group consisting of T.G.W.U. members belonging to the same Parent Company. Finally, we should add that the perceived untrustworthiness of Management is also likely to have strengthened the argument that Ansell's were bluffing.

#### 6.4. The Confidence to Strike.

Faith in the rectitude of their action is not always sufficient to compel workers to go on strike. They must also be convinced that they stand a reasonable chance of success. As stated previously, such confidence often stems from a previous history of success. The maxim, "If it worked before, repeat it" is regularly applied in many spheres of political and organizational life. (Jervis, 1976; Kennedy, 1981; Mangham, 1978).

No doubt previous success was a positive spur to the Ansell's workers at the outset of the 1981 dispute. Usually in the past, quarrels



with Management proceeded according to a tried and tested script whereby strike action (or, in many cases, merely the threat of strike action) tended to produce a satisfactory settlement for the workers. This was especially true of the directly comparable disputes concerning "Manpower Efficiency" (1975-1980) which, for reasons already enumerated (i.e., greater representativeness/availability/vividness), will have most influenced their judgement. Here, past experience will have suggested a favourable outcome to the strike; hence the confidence to engage in industrial action.

Any complacency that may have existed at the outset of the dispute must have disappeared with the announcement of the closure on February 9th. This move was taken as confirmation of Allied's determination to "smash" the unions, and prompted the strike leaders to take stock of their position. They already knew that the Parent Company had forfeited £6 million during the Warrington dispute, and that they would probably be willing to pay an even higher price to defeat the Anells strike, such was the seriousness of the issue involved. A long stoppage was, therefore, in prospect.

Given this likelihood, the strike leaders needed to consider: (a) whether the rank-and-file possessed sufficient determination to endure a long dispute; (b) to what extent the T.G.W.U. would be willing to direct their members not to cross Anells picket lines or, in the extreme case, put pressure on Allied by refusing to handle their products; and (c) if other trade unionists within Allied would ensure that no extra beer was produced at their breweries to compensate for the loss of barrelage at Aston Cross or, if need be, stage their own sympathetic strike.

With regard to (a), it was clear that the strike leaders never doubted the commitment of their own rank-and-file. This confidence in

their followers was largely based on the presence of a strong "family feeling" among workers at the brewery. This clear sense of "belongingness" and identification with fellow employees was no doubt encouraged by the existence of a closed shop, although a more feasible explanation concerns the Company's informal approach to recruitment, whereby preference was given to the friends and relatives of existing workers. The implications of this were clear, as an Ansell's striker explained:

"All over the country, people are getting sacking threats every time there is a dispute. But this is the union branch which says it is sticking to its guns. We are adamant that we are going to keep going right to the bitter end...It won't work at Ansell's. We are all in one union for a start. There is a tremendous family feeling. People know each other well and there is much more solidarity than on the B.L. shop floor." (Birmingham Post, February 10th, 1981).

The Ansell's strike was made "official" by the T.G.W.U. on February 4th. However, the strike leaders needed to decide whether the union's full-time officers would play a "meaningful" role in the dispute, and looked around for antecedent causal conditions on which to base their prediction. Ultimately, they based their conjecture that the T.G.W.U. officers would wholeheartedly support the strike on the knowledge that the prestige of the union was supposedly at an all-time low. Membership had fallen dramatically, partly as a result of a series of lost strikes concerning redundancies, and it was generally considered that the Ansell's strike provided an opportunity to reverse this trend.

It was at this point that the "special relationship" between the District Secretary and the Branch Chairman proved invaluable. Mr. Austin was able to confide in the Branch Committee that both the Regional and Divisional Secretaries (Brian Mathers and Douglas Fairbairn, respectively) seriously doubted that the Ansell's workers would win their strike, and that they would use the forthcoming mass

meeting (on February 14th) to persuade them to call off their action. However, Austin also impressed upon the Committee that, despite this intention, the full-time officers would still not hesitate to pledge the "full backing" of the T.G.W.U. in the event of a vote in favour of continuing the strike.

Consequently, prior to the mass meeting, the strike leaders were able to implement a plan which involved convincing the rank-and-file that the "pessimism" about to be showed by the Regional and Divisional Secretaries was merely designed to test the determination of the strikers and should not be taken seriously. As one shop steward emphasised to a group of pickets:

"We've got to show them that we're solid. If we do that, we'll have the full weight of the T. and G. behind us. So, we want none of this 'orderly meeting' stuff. Say what you want, and open your bloody mouths. Raise the roof off."

He proceeded to warn them that a "very gloomy picture" would be painted, but assured them that this was deliberately false. The T.G.W.U. badly needed a victory and were simply making sure that the Ansell's workers were "hungry enough" to succeed on their behalf.

As a consequence of such activities the mass meeting went off as planned. Mathers and Fairbairn insisted that the Company were not bluffing with regard to the closure of the brewery but, soon realising that the strikers were undeterred, they concluded the meeting by promising the "wholehearted support" of the union. Plainly, the strike leaders had used their control over the flow of information and other "impression management" techniques to avoid a premature end to the stoppage.

Prior to the mass meeting, there was considerable uncertainty as to whether workers elsewhere in Allied Breweries would sympathetically support the strike. A principal cause of concern, here, was that the anxiety caused by high unemployment and the low demand for beer

might deter such workers from going on strike. However, the outcome of the meeting created a renewed sense of optimism, based on perceptions that the T.G.W.U.'s national officers were empowered to issue a directive instructing the other trade unionists to support the Ansell's strike. The strikers now saw no reason why the dispute should not become a famous historical landmark: a cause celebre to rival Saltley, Grunwick or the release of the Pentonville Five. (c.f. Allen, 1981; Dromey and Taylor, 1978; Pelling, 1976).

#### 6.5. Evaluating the Key Aspects of Decision-making.

##### (a) Misinterpreting the situation?

Whilst our pre-existing beliefs, theories and propositions about people and events are of enormous advantage in helping us to organize our experience, they are all-too apt to produce a picture of the world that is sometimes over-precise, inappropriate and ultimately misleading. (Nisbett and Ross, 1980).

One obvious danger of applying cognitive scripts is that they tend to operate to the total exclusion of alternative definitions of reality. (Jervis, 1976). Thus, with regard to the Ansell's strike, once Management's tactics had been interpreted as a B.L.-style attempt to demolish the unions, alternative definitions were not even considered. Consequently, no serious attention was given to the possibility that Ansell's hard-line attitude might have stemmed from a genuine concern for the brewery's survival.

Instead, by defining the situation entirely unequivocally as "Another B.L.", the strikers were inclined to dismiss Management's appeals for greater cost effectiveness as a poor disguise for a more sinister ambition. One can never rule out the possibility that the workers were correct to define the employers' actions as part of a plan

to undermine trade union power. However, it is also conceivable that it was the employees' own inability even to consider that Management's "concern" for the Company should be treated at face value which finally left Allied with no alternative other than to close the brewery.

The ill-fated decisions to "call the Company's bluff" regarding the successive threats of closure illustrate another well-recognised danger involving the use of cognitive scripts. Jervis (op.cit.) has dealt at some length with the tendency for decision-makers to "use history badly" (i.e., to "slight the importance of conditions and circumstances"). This failing was evident in each of the Ansell's workers' decisions to ignore the Company's threats. Though there were superficial similarities between the present situation and the previous threats of closure at Warrington and Aston Cross, ostensibly making them legitimate bases of comparison, a stricter examination of the comparative circumstances would have revealed some important contextual changes.

Thus, with regard to Ansell's initial threat of closure in January, 1981, it is apparent that a straightforward comparison with the events of the previous July were unjustified because of changes in the prevailing economic climate. It is true that the threatened closure of 1980 was delivered at a time of growing economic crisis for the beer industry as a whole. However, by January an even greater deterioration of business had made the need for rationalization all the more acute. It should also be remembered that each of Management's previous attempts to reduce costs (including the offer of voluntary redundancies and the implementation of the four-day week) had failed. Consequently, there was a stronger likelihood of closure due to the exhaustion of alternative options.

Similarly, if we turn to the Warrington script as a basis for assuming that Management were not serious in claiming to have

permanently closed the brewery, it is evident that, although broad similarities existed, some important differences were ignored. Here again, we must begin by pointing out that the state of the beer market was healthier in 1979 than in 1981. Consequently, Allied were less concerned at that stage with attempts to reduce their costs. Moreover, by 1981, Allied were beginning to experience wasteful over-capacity, particularly at their highly-mechanised Ind Coope brewery in Burton-on-Trent. Therefore, in contrast to the situation at Warrington two years earlier, the Company were in the advantageous position of being able to compensate for any loss of production arising from a closure.

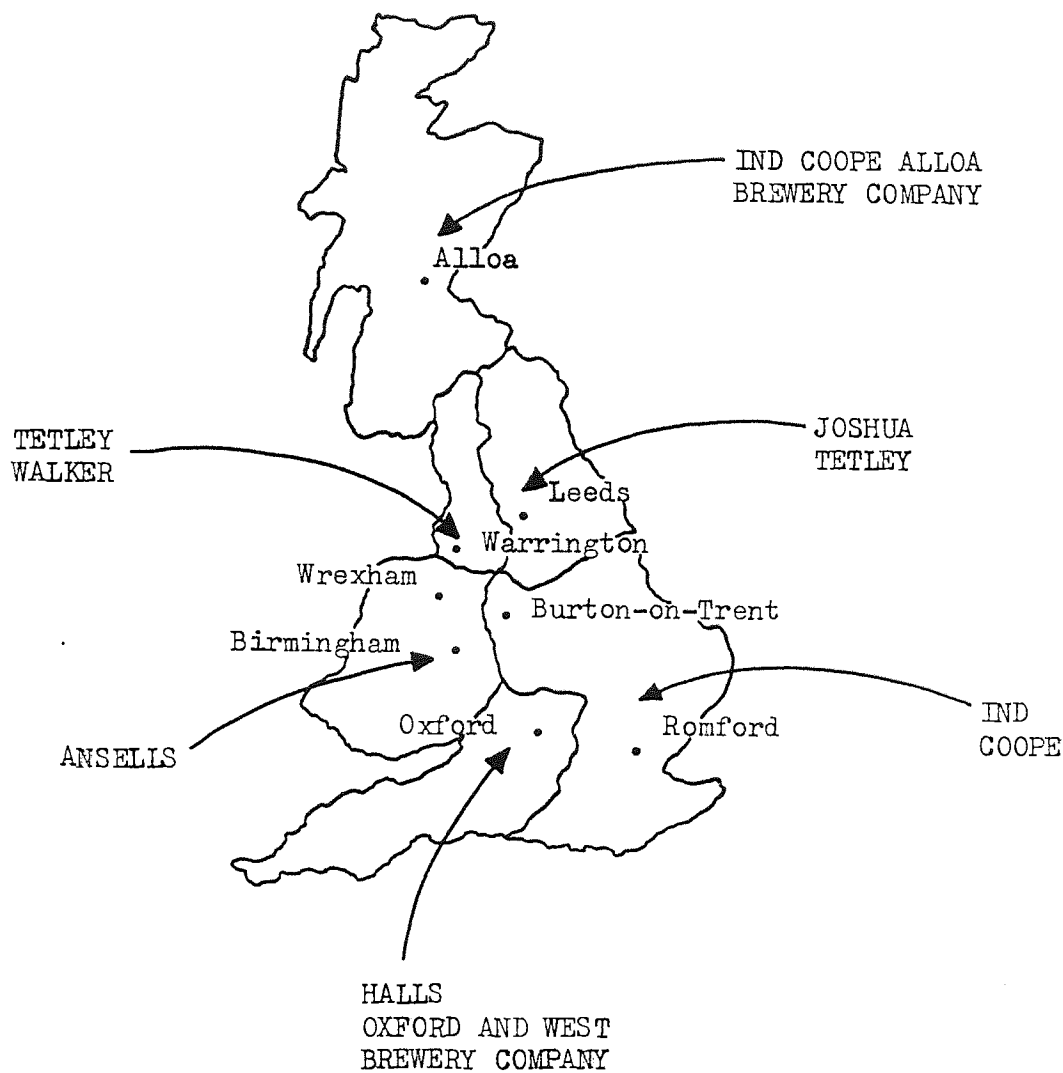
We can see from Fig.5, overleaf, that the Ind Coope complex is located within close proximity of Birmingham, making it relatively straightforward to brew beer at Burton before transporting it via the modern depots at Aldridge and Gravelly Park for distribution to Ansell's markets in the Midlands and South Wales.

In recent years, Allied had invested great sums of money into the brewery, but changes in market demand made it dangerous to suppose that the Company would not go through with the closure simply to protect its investment:

"Over the past two years Ansell's have ploughed a great deal of investment into the Aston plant, including new traditional beer casking facilities that cost several hundred thousand pounds, which no doubt convinces the unions that the brewery would have no intentions of wasting this investment. If beer sales were healthy, this might be a fair assumption. But the state of the market is joining forces with the Ansell's management to place the strikers in a very precarious position." (Sandwell Express and Star, February 10th, 1981).

Perhaps this assumption by the Ansell's workers reflects the tendency for decision-makers to extrapolate too eagerly. People typically assume that a present trend will continue well into the future, "not stopping to consider what produced it or why a linear projection might prove to be mistaken." (May, 1973: pxi).

Fig. 5. Map Showing Location of Allied Breweries' Main Production Units.



(Source: The Financial Times, August 23rd, 1978).

The strikers also failed to recognise that previously-successful policies often alter the decision-making environment in such a way as to make a straightforward repetition inadvisable. One must remember that the opposition will also be looking to learn from their earlier mistakes. (Kennedy, 1981). Thus, given that the Company's previous bluff tactic was a failure, it was unlikely that they would resort to a similar threat without it being more genuine than the last.

Finally, we emphasised earlier that individuals prefer to establish single explanations for a given phenomenon, rather than having to nominate a host of possible causes. (Kanouse, 1971; Steinbruner, 1974). No doubt this helps to account for the Ansell's strikers' reluctance to consider alternative definitions of events to the B.L. and closure scripts - a tendency that was probably enhanced both by the "distorting" effect of distrustful relations with Management (Pruitt, 1965; Purcell, 1979) and the "crisis" conditions under which the judgements were made. (Hosking and Morley, 1983; Janis and Mann, 1977).

(b) Overestimating their strength?

A failure to pay adequate attention to the context in which previous "victories" over Management were achieved may also help to explain the over-confident attitude with which the Ansell's workers initially went on strike. Accumulated experience might have suggested to them that immediate strike action was the correct policy to pursue, but, as Jervis explains, old strategies are often fraught with risk:

"When a policy has brought notable success, actors are likely to apply it to a range of later situations. Seeing these cases as resembling the past one, the actor will believe that they are amenable to the policy that worked previously. But when insufficient attention is paid to the reasons why the policy worked in the past, the new situation will not be scrutinised to see if it has the attributes that made the earlier success possible." (op. cit.:p278).



Of clearest relevance to the decision to go on strike in protest over the imposition of the four-day week were the lessons of previous disputes involving the related issues of job security and "Manpower Efficiency" (i.e., those occurring between 1975 and 1980). On each separate occasion, the workers staved off Management's attempts to achieve greater cost effectiveness by adopting an uncompromising rearguard action. Experience therefore showed that instant defiance in the form of threatened or actual strike action was the most sensible policy to apply. It could also be argued that the distrust of Management promoted the use of strike action as an early resort: on the grounds that it was "the only language the Company was sure to understand."

Had the Ansell's workers conducted a more thorough examination of the prevailing socio-economic circumstances, they would have undoubtedly realised that the conditions that contributed to their previous success were no longer present. (It is worth mentioning that all but one of the employees' earlier victories in strikes over "Manpower Efficiency" were achieved during Christmas or Bank Holiday periods. Even so, the victorious 6-week strike of 1975 was proof that a stoppage did not have to coincide with a "peak period" to be successful).

A far more serious aspect of change relates to our earlier discussion regarding the declining demand for beer. In contrast to previous years when there had been a thriving demand for beer, projected forecasts for 1981 promised a serious market decline. This was partly due to changing consumer tastes away from traditional beverages, such as mild and bitter beers, to "modern" drinks like cider and wine. Perhaps the main reason, however, was the onset of the economic recession, accompanying high unemployment and an inevitable reduction in the consumption of beer.

This market decline had important implications for the handling

of disputes at Aston Cross. In previous years the Company had been prepared to make repeated concessions in order to take full commercial advantage of the demand for their beer; but, by 1981 the incentive to be tolerant had greatly diminished.

On top of this, the brewery had begun to make substantial losses as a production unit: a matter of considerable concern to the Parent Board. It may be recalled that, since the "second revolution" of 1978, Allied had placed a heavier accent on efficiency and profitability, the policy being that no help would be offered to "lame duck" subsidiaries. They were also aware of the problems caused to them by the Ansell's workers in recent years (witness the Fox and Goose Affair). All these factors (together with the existence of excess capacity at Burton) guaranteed that the Company's attitude would not be as concessionary as in the past. Hence, the conditions that had been central to the success of the previous policy of immediate counter-aggression no longer worked in the employees' favour.

Old habits die hard. So, too, do long-established values and perceptions, especially when they have been shaped by a powerful tradition:

"The significance of tradition is therefore manifest. It may prove, however, a source of weakness as well as of strength. Tradition helps to socialize members in their obligations and to support the drooping spirits of activists at moments of doubt. It is likely to have been shaped, however, by calculations of means to ends which, though producing success in the past, may have less relevance in the present where ends, though remaining broadly the same, are receiving new practical interpretations, and where means too, therefore, call for adaptation to a changed environment. New interpretations may prove difficult to achieve where tradition maintains habitual perceptions and responses generated in an earlier and different situation." (Fox, 1971:p128).

It is a related point that previous success is apt to consolidate the power and prestige of the strike leadership and undermine the influence of potential detractors. (Blake, et al., 1964:pp40-41). Thus, in the case of the Ansell's strike there will have been an inevitable

bias towards the re-implementation of old strategies (with the same cognitive script continuing to dominate their thinking). (Jervis, op. cit.).

Of course, once the decision was taken to go on strike, a chain reaction was activated. Management immediately submitted their demands for more redundancies and changes in working practices, and the employees interpreted their action as part of a plan to demolish the trade union organization. Both sides established their unwillingness to compromise: a situation which soon led to the closure of the Aston brewery.

As stated previously, the Ansell workers were initially uncertain as to what extent the other employees in Allied's Beer Division would sympathetically support the strike. However, once the T.G.W.U.'s Regional Secretary pledged the support of his organization this became a secondary consideration.

What the rank-and-file clearly failed to appreciate was that the situation had been "stage managed" by the District Secretary, the Branch Committee and the senior shop stewards. It is also evident that the strike leaders, themselves, may have been somewhat over-optimistic in assuming that, once drawn into it, the T.G.W.U. would wholeheartedly back the strike. Whilst it was feasible to assume that the desire to restore prestige would be a powerful motivating force, it is also possible to conceive of reasons why the union might have wanted to distance itself from the strike.

The potential loss of funds incurred by such a strike, the risk of damaging a long-standing bargaining relationship with Allied Breweries and the possibility of jeopardising the jobs of other people employed by the Parent Company were all strong incentives for the T.G.W.U. not to become too involved in the strike. The fact that such arguments did not figure prominently during the Ansell dispute is

possibly best accounted for by the tendency for people's judgements to be coloured by their value for a specific mode of response. (Steinbruner, 1974).

#### 6.6. Summary.

This chapter has demonstrated how the Ansells workers' decision to strike was based on the "preexisting systems of schematized and abstracted knowledge" available to them in terms of their prior experience as a social group. (Nisbett and Ross, 1980:p7). Powerful images (or "scripts") depicting Management's actions as an attempt to "smash" the beer unions, the closure of the brewery as a coercive bluff, and strike action as a foregone conclusion in their favour underpinned their readiness for confrontation.

However, the chapter has also underlined that many of the strikers' conclusions were inappropriate and ill-defined, thus confirming the view that the cognitive inferential mechanisms regularly applied by strategic decision-makers often constitute "inaccurate representations of the social world." (ibid).

## CHAPTER SEVEN. HOW COMMITMENT WAS MAINTAINED.

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of the Ansell's strike was its sheer length. One undoubted reason for this concerns the way in which the situation was cognitively represented: as an industrial "holy war" with the survival of the beer unions at stake. As with the national steel stoppage of the previous year, "what the strike demonstrated in strictly human terms was that people convinced of a cause will make any sacrifice for as long as is required of them. Notions such as that of a 'wartime spirit' are not mere platitudes but a living reality." (Docherty, 1983:p231).

Of equal significance was the feeling (once the closure had finally been accepted as irrevocable) that the men had nothing further to lose by staying on strike, but had everything to gain by remaining in dispute with the Company. This, too, affected their resolution to continue.

However, in addition to these factors, other social-cognitive processes were at work whose principal effect was to buttress important beliefs, thereby protecting them from threat. Two processes in particular warrant closer attention: first, the tendency for individuals to encode information in ways which consolidated prior beliefs; and, second, the methods by which strike activists manipulated the information at their disposal (i.e., used impression management) to maintain rank-and-file commitment. This will help to explain why, among other things, the belief that Management were bluffing lasted for quite so long, and why the men's desire to continue the dispute was sustained long after it ceased to appear the rational thing to do.

## 7.1. The Self-confirming Tendencies of Initial Beliefs.

Having originally appraised the situation in terms of the cognitive representations outlined in Chapter Six, the Ansell workers displayed a subsequent propensity to process further information in ways that confirmed their initial impressions and upheld commitment to the strike. As we shall now see, this had various manifestations.

There can be little doubt that the most compelling evidence in support of a given definition involves the occurrence of seemingly validatory events. A vivid example of this during the strike concerned a rumour, circulated in March, that T.G.W.U. workers at Allied's Tetley Walker brewery in Leeds were to be served with a similar ultimatum to the one received by the Ansell employees (i.e., demanding either that they agree to proposed changes in working practices, or risk losing their jobs).

Although this constituted nothing more than a rumour at this stage,\* it was immediately seized upon as unambiguous evidence of Allied's intention to become the "Michael Edwardes of their industry". Clearly, the rumoured events at Leeds may have been totally unrelated to the Birmingham dispute, but the Ansell strikers regarded the matter differently, perceiving a sinister connection between two ostensibly separate situations.

A similar example relates to the popular stereotype of Management that was formed at the outbreak of the strike. Accusations that Management were "devious", "scheming", "vicious", "heartless" or "two-faced" permeated everyday conversation on the picket lines.

(\*But see Chapter Eight, page 167).

This general impression of Management was progressively reinforced by such widely-quoted examples of their behaviour as their refusal to grant a £10,000 Death-in-Service payment to the widow of an Ansell's striker who died during the dispute.

Allied Breweries argued that, whilst it was true that the husband had fallen ill prior to the onset of the strike, he nevertheless failed to sign a form accepting the Company's right to re-open the two distribution depots, thus associating himself with the aims of the industrial action. The widow protested that her spouse had been far too ill to understand this technicality, but the Company refused to accept any liability.

Patently, there is an air of vulnerability about widows: something which arouses strong feelings of indignation whenever it seems they are being abused. (See Wood and Pedler(1978) for a similar example). Not surprisingly, therefore, this episode was seen as confirming the view that Management were thoroughly unscrupulous and devoid of compassion.

The type of retrospective sense-making processes outlined in Chapter One may also help to account for another tendency observed during the dispute: for workers to generate additional reasons (i.e., over and above those originally acted upon) as to why they supposed that Management were bluffing. Thus, some two weeks after the closure of the brewery, entirely novel arguments came to light, namely: that the brewery was based on an artesian well whose water was an essential ingredient in the renowned Ansell's Mild; that Management would be unwilling to alienate "confirmed" Ansell's drinkers by brewing their beers at Burton; and that Allied would not take the risk of brewing all their Midlands beer exclusively at one location (i.e., Burton), since this would increase their vulnerability to the threat of industrial action. It would be surprising if this additional reasoning

did not consolidate the view that Management were bluffing.

As was predicted in Chapter One, a range of retrieval biases also seemed to reinforce many of the original beliefs. Numerous examples were observed of the tendency to cite anecdotal evidence from the past in support of current beliefs. For example, one of the pickets reminded his colleagues of the occasion when a number of Ansell's directors attended a luncheon for Birmingham industrialists where the guest speaker was Sir Michael Edwardes. According to his personal recollection of events, the luncheon took place when the "Derek Robinson Affair" was at its height, and Sir Michael set about justifying his "tough" policy to the local managerial elite. In keeping with the current definition of events, it was the picket's firm view that it was whilst attending this function that the Ansell's directors were taught the rudiments of the "B.L. approach".

A related form of retrieval bias was also fairly commonplace: that of re-interpreting aspects of previous experience to make them consonant with existing beliefs. For example, during one instance of picket-line conversation, two workmates engaged in a spontaneous re-evaluation of the behaviour of one particular member of Management whom they had found to be "unusually high spirited" during the pre-Christmas period:

"Laughing and joking, he was. We thought he'd caught the Christmas spirit: 'goodwill to all men' and all that stuff. Now of course, we realise what was happening: he knew in advance what we had coming to us, and was really taking the piss."

Yet another factor underlying the preservation of beliefs was the tendency for Ansell's workers to consistently misinterpret disconfirmatory information. The strikers were regularly confronted with information which ought to have indicated that aspects of their overall assessment were wrong; but the problem was that such information also seemed consistent with their own definition of reality.



Thus, for example, the Company's rejection of the peace initiatives by local M.P.s and City Councillors did not adversely effect morale for the simple reason that this was precisely the type of behaviour one might have expected of Ansell had they really been bluffing.

A similar explanation could equally be applied to the strikers' inability to appreciate that many of the apparently subversive activities on the part of the T.G.W.U.'s full-time officers were symptomatic of the Union's desire to extricate itself from the strike. It may be recalled that the Regional and Divisional Secretaries both seemed intent upon undermining support for the strike (specifically, by encouraging the crossing of picket lines, providing "scab" beer to "dry" pubs and refusing to acknowledge that the dispute was official outside of the Midlands area).

Though one might have expected morale to suffer as a consequence of this action, this was clearly not the case. A type of "splitting off" process occurred whereby the strikers were able to convince themselves that the machinations of Mathers and Fairbairn were due to deficiencies in their respective personalities, and should not be considered a sign that the T.G.W.U. as an organization were slowly deserting the strike.

Finally, although it cannot be said with certainty, it is possible that the "belief perseverance effect", outlined in Chapter One, was partially responsible for the endurance of initial beliefs. We already know that crucial outcomes were predicted on the basis of antecedent causal conditions thought likely to produce them. Thus, the prediction that the T.G.W.U. would wholeheartedly support the strike was linked to the prior knowledge that they were keen to recover lost prestige; and, the belief that the Company would rescind the decision to close was based, at least in part, on the background

supposition that they would be loathe to waste their investment. Perhaps the very act of justifying such predictions produced a form of "unwarranted subjective certainty" (Ross, et al., 1977) that contributed to the length of the strike.

## 7.2. The Role of Impression Management.

Now, we turn to the use of impression management during the strike, examining how it was employed by activists to maintain rank-and-file commitment. We distinguish, for the sake of analysis, between two basic processes: the use of rhetorical devices and control over the flow of information; though, in practice, the two processes tend to overlap. (Hall, 1972).

### (a) The use of rhetorical devices.

It was emphasized in Chapter One that numerous rhetorical devices, both linguistic and non-linguistic, may be used to telling effect to encourage or sustain a particular view of a strike. An interesting example of the former occurred during the Ansell's dispute in the form of a satirical letter, circulated by the Branch Committee. The full text was as follows:

"A message from Robbing Thompson\* to all employees in dispute:  
I feel that the time has come when I should say something to you on how Ansell's has been doing recently and what the future holds. But I can't, I'm too upset. I suppose you think it's clever sticking together for this long. Well, maybe it is, but let me inform you of some of the options we still have open to us. Excluding suicide and emigration, we could um, er, well, think of something.

(\* The names mentioned are pseudonyms for the Ansell's Chairman, Robin Thompson, and the Vice-chairman of Allied, Sir Derrick Holden-Brown).

I sent a carrier pigeon (because, as you know, we've had the 'phone cut off) to my fellow-director, Derrick Hold-'em-Down, yesterday. I said, Derrick, I am going to put my foot down on this one. This was not such a good idea as the floor-boards are rotten here in the Boardroom. I said, if the men don't come back next week or the week after, they won't be back for at least a fortnight. The Allied Board are very annoyed with you, you know. We can't understand what has got you so riled up; was it because we wanted to buy your beer tickets back? Or maybe it's (the Personnel Director's) new six cylinder, fully air-conditioned, two-toned, oil-cooled, electronic ignition, incorporated, power-assisted, lip-smacking, picket-proof Volvo had something to do with it. I have to say this, though, that the pickets who found out my address and wrote 'Martin Boorman lives here' on my door could be prosecuted if found out. Also, some of you disputeers have branded me and my Board as liars. This is just not so. We said in our annual Christmas report of December, 1980, that 'together, we could go places in 1981'. Well, I went to the Canary Islands for a week in January, and I dare say that most of you paid a visit to your local downtown social security offices. And what about the trip to London fifty of you went on last week?\*

Just a word on those collections you've been receiving from firms lately. I had the staff branch from Lucas write to me and ask if they could do anything to help my staff here at Ansell's. Unfortunately, I'm afraid I had to decline. We need State aid, not Lucasaid. But may I say that the gift of the new chair sent to me by Messrs. Ken Bradley and his committee was extremely well received and it looks a treat in the Boardroom. Can't wait for the electricity to be turned on so I can try it. In conclusion, may I wish you all a very prosperous 1981 and hope that this letter from myself and my fellow-directors will help me in some way to explain why we had to cut your wages by £40, boot the union reps out, finish with overtime, double output, give less time to do it in and generally degrade you all."

Clearly, the above letter was the Branch Committee's own attempt to remind their members of the implications of the revised working practices. Stylistically, the letter was very similar to the one written by Robin Thompson to all employees on January 9th, 1981.

(See Appendix VI(ii)). However, the satirical version is loaded, throughout, with reference to such matters as the "hypocrisy" of the Company (the purchasing of new Volvos during a supposed economic

(\*A reference to the trip to the House of Commons to lobby M.P.s).

economic crisis), the futility of Ansell's attempts to defeat the strikers and the potentially degrading effects of the 9-Point Plan. Above all, the letter is a positive attempt to reinforce a particular stereotype of Management: i.e., as cheaters, liars and double-dealers.

It was also stressed in Chapter One that many diverse forms of non-linguistic symbolism (objects, acts and gestures) may equally be used to promote existing definitions of reality. One of the least obtrusive forms used during the Ansell's strike was the regular appearance of cartoons. Amateur sketches depicting scenes like that of the Ansell's pub landlord apologetically serving up milk to dissatisfied customers (due, of course, to the "success" of the flying pickets) were commonly found pinned to picket shelters or the H.Q. notice-board.

Photographs had an especially powerful effect. One set of pictures purporting to show barrel loads of "scab" beer (i.e., trucked in by Management from other breweries to offset the effects of picketing) being unloaded by "dole-queue labourers" on local farm premises, outraged every striker who saw them. The principal effect of the photographs was to consolidate the view that Management were totally unscrupulous and prepared to engage in any manner of misdeeds in their determination to break the unions.

(b) Control over the flow of information.

The way in which factual details are presented (or, alternatively, concealed) can have a profound effect on the morale of any group of strikers. Certainly, this was true of the Ansell's strike where the outflow of positive information was maximised, and the emergence of negative, or "destructive" information (Goffman, 1959) was either totally suppressed or its impact skilfully nullified, thus prolonging the strike.

(i) The maximum disclosure of favourable information. Preferential access to items of information and the necessary means and authority to communicate them was a key factor in enabling the strike leaders to project a consistently favourable view of reality. Consider the following example, which appeared on an early strike bulletin:

"Rust is beginning to appear in the mighty enemy's armour from waiting in snow-covered car parks for their foreign beers to arrive. These are a few of their many disappointments: a 32-ton articulated vehicle was turned away from the Church Tavern and went back to Southend. The driver of a contract hire waggon from Burton that broke the picket line at Eagle Breweries, Newtown, has been severely disciplined, along with the person who sent him there. The two drivers from Burton who left their loads unattended at Llandudno were also severely disciplined by the Burton trade union."

This type of account (rivalling the apocryphal "angler's tale for its determination to make the most of small fry) was somewhat typical of the strike.

Another important consequence of the "gatekeeping" position occupied by strike leaders was that the rank-and-file automatically assumed that their Branch officers had a far more accurate overview of the strike than that suggested by their own, highly localised view of reality. The Branch committee profited considerably from this advantage, frequently making the type of claim that:

"The picketing is being very effective. Although the individuals may not see it, at the centre it is very clear. Over two-thirds of the pubs are closed and the take for the rest is only a small fraction of the normal. It is costing a tremendous amount to get the few lorries through which do escape the pickets' watchful eye. Publicans are paying more than £17 a barrel over the odds and there are reports of tenants trying to sell beer at 6p a pint over normal price to try and get their outlay back - positive signs of our effectiveness."

(ii) The suppression of dissent. As stated previously, one of the least-recognised ways by which powerful groups within organizations are able to gain advantage over their opponents and detractors is

evoke certain "rules of the game" in order to prevent potentially embarrassing issues from reaching the decision-making arena.

An example of this occurred very early on in the Ansell's strike at a time when Management were first threatening to close down the brewery. Although one might have expected the Branch Committee to call a mass meeting at this stage in order to canvass their members' views, shop stewards later admitted that they had skilfully sidestepped any possibility of a vote. They considered at the time that the threatened loss of employment might cause some consternation among the rank-and-file with the result that even a minority vote in favour of a return to work would adversely affect morale.

Thus, when asked by a reporter why the issue was not to go before a mass meeting, the Branch Chairman justified the decision according to a previous resolution:

"We had a clear mandate from the members that there would be no return to work until the issue had been resolved, so the mandate still stands. There is no point in calling a meeting because there has been no movement from the Company." (Birmingham Post, January 24th, 1981).

A further example involving the covert use of power concerned Ansell's abortive attempt to ballot their workforce on March 4th/5th. Here, shop stewards considered that there was nothing to be gained but everything to lose by participating in this exercise. A clear majority in favour of continuing the strike would merely confirm what they were already claiming to be the case, whereas a majority against would undermine their leadership and effectively terminate the dispute. Either way, a substantial vote against would also be damaging to the extent that knowledge of results would have a normative and informational influence on many strikers who had previously been unable to ascertain what the vast majority of their colleagues privately felt about the strike.

It must be appreciated that, in the main, "gangs" of pickets were widely dispersed around the main brewery building, the distribution depots, pubs and clubs, and wholesale and retail outlets in the area. This factor, together with the round-the-clock shift system being operated, meant that only limited communication was allowed between one group of pickets and the next.

Even more significant was the fact that each picketing gang was invariably made up of firm friends. Thus, whilst this encouraged some candour of expression within the group, individuals often lacked the confidence to betray their true feelings to members of other gangs. Small pockets of workers may, therefore, have wanted an end to the strike, but the sensation that they were in a small minority inhibited a public expression of their feelings. (See Lane and Roberts(1971: p102) for a similar example).

This is not necessarily to imply that there was a clear majority, at this stage, in favour of ending the strike; merely to note that even a sizeable minority vote might have given confidence of expression to those people who were privately opposed to continuing the dispute and, perhaps, induced others to reappraise the situation. Knowing that it was, therefore, in their interests to prevent the ballot, the strike leaders took steps to render it null and void.

Clearly, advance knowledge of the Company's intention to hold a ballot was a major advantage in the strike leaders' favour. Thus, even before individual strikers actually received their ballot papers, they were presented with two reasons why it was imperative for them to take their voting slip to the strike H.Q. prior to registering their vote: First, it was considered important that each striker should be made fully aware of the implications of his decision; and, second, it was the stewards' intention to conduct their own count of the

votes cast, lest the Company should feel tempted to broadcast false results. "Responsible" pickets were also assigned to the task of collecting the names of all colleagues who refused to comply with this policy.

Predictably, the ballot was rendered a farce. Ansells' immediate reaction was to abandon the project. They claimed to have evidence that the ballot had not been conducted in secret, that pressure was put on individual voters and that the stewards had completed large quantities of ballot papers in their own hand. Personal observations confirm that such allegations were accurate.

Nevertheless, the next strike bulletin erupted with contempt for the Company:

"Don't they yet realise the feelings that members have against the Ansells management? How can we force people to vote the way they do? Don't they realise that the only offer worth balloting the membership on is whether we want our jobs, conditions and organization back?"

Clearly, the strike leaders had every reason to be relieved at the fate of the Company's ballot.

(iii) The nullification of negative information. The strike leaders were constantly aware of how negative information regarding the ineffectiveness of the strike might have a depletive effect on morale. Steps were, therefore, to conceal such information or, where this proved impossible, provide advance or retrospective interpretations that were designed to nullify its impact.

The most obvious example of the widespread concealment of information occurred when the first squads of flying pickets returned home from the Romford brewery. Frankly, most of their attempts to turn back supplies had no discernible effect. However, one fortunate aspect of the situation, from the strike leaders' point of view, was that the majority of these pickets represented the "hard core"



activists who most vigorously supported the strike. Not surprisingly, such people could be relied upon to conceal their disappointment from others and generally exaggerate the overall degree of success.

Wherever it was possible to say in advance that unpalatable information was about to come to light, pre-emptive steps were usually taken to reduce its negative impact. For example, when it was first realised that the picketing of the pubs was slowly losing its effectiveness, the following reassurance was transmitted to the strikers:

"Do not get disheartened if a pub opens up. Ansell's are doing it for show to make it look as if they are winning. The effectiveness of our picketing is illustrated by the trouble they have to get any beer in. The cost of opening a pub can be more than the cost of keeping it closed." (Source: strike bulletin).

Sometimes, of course, events happen unexpectedly, defying attempts to interpret them in advance. Perhaps the most significant example of this during the Ansell's strike occurred after the talks at A.C.A.S. when Alex Kitson, the T.G.W.U.'s Acting General Secretary, was quoted as having accepted that the closure of the brewery was irrevocable, and of practically conceding that the strike was lost.

Clearly, such news had to be taken seriously, and there was an air of despondency on the picket lines on the next day. However, also in evidence was a large presence of shop stewards and several of their more "active" colleagues from the flying picket corps who had obviously arrived with the intention of discrediting the local radio news reports. They maintained that, contrary to such reports, Kitson had adopted a totally uncompromising approach at A.C.A.S. and remained loyal to the objective of re-opening the brewery.

This theme was repeated at a number of sectional meetings held over the next three days. For example, at a meeting of all production workers 24 hours later, Matt Folarin, the Branch Vice-chairman,

scoffed at suggestions that Kitson had accepted defeat: "Alex Kitson told them to go away as soon as they (the Press) approached him. So, whoever they were quoting, it wasn't Alex Kitson."

Though activities of this nature had a temporarily reassuring effect, the leakage of destructive information was becoming far too unpredictable for the strike leaders to contain. On April 11th, four days after the A.C.A.S. discussions, Management released the following circular, informing the pickets that:

"The T. and G. members, with the exception of Mr. Austin, accepted that the Aston brewery had closed and would not re-open, either as a brewery or packaging unit. It was apparent that the T. and G. were anxious to re-open negotiations which would lead to the re-opening of the Gravelly Park and Aldridge Depots, but that they would have to convince the Branch (5/377) that they (the Branch) must authorise their officials to negotiate with the Company on the amount of ex-gratia payment, and the terms for those that would be re-employed at Gravelly and Aldridge."

This disclosure had a visible effect. At the next mass meeting\* there was a noticeable decline in attendance (a reduction of perhaps two to three hundred). However, during the meeting, the District Secretary talked about the role of Alex Kitson at A.C.A.S. and declared himself "thoroughly satisfied" with the conduct of his senior officer. He strongly refuted the claims made in the Management circular before paraphrasing a letter sent to him by Kitson. According to Mr. Austin, this letter strongly condemned the media on account of their "blatant distortion of the facts", and went on to emphasise that the T.G.W.U. were now more resolutely in support of the strike than they had ever been before.

Here, of course, the intervention by the T.G.W.U.'s District Secretary was designed to stem the potential breakdown of morale

(\* On April 17th).

arising from the leakage of destructive information. It is impossible to assess how far Austin's message managed to allay the uncertainty surrounding the A.C.A.S. talks. Personal observations suggested a general air of reassurance tempered by some legacy of doubt. It seems reasonable to speculate that source effects were a key factor, here: whereas the strike leaders were widely perceived as trustworthy, both Management and the media were looked upon as scurrilous opponents of the strike with vested interests in misrepresenting and/or over-sensationalising the facts.

### 7.3. The Use of Coercion During the Strike.

Finally, there was no observable evidence to suggest that the direct use of force (including, for example, the threatened or actual resort to violence) ever played a part in sustaining the Ansells strike. Nevertheless, in late February, a local Sunday newspaper published an article citing widespread intimidation by strike activists against their fellow-pickets.

A tragic picture was painted of one man who, allegedly, "...burst into tears as he spoke of his own fears that he might never work again in the Midlands if he doesn't go along with picket duties, give money to flying pickets and sleep on the streets all night on picket duty, although he has a medical condition." (Sunday Mercury, February 22nd, 1981).

The article was angrily condemned in the next strike bulletin as "muck-raking journalism": specifically designed to "undermine and discredit the union and its members (and) to divide us to the point where everyone thinks the dispute is out of control and beyond the direction of the T.G.W.U." Whilst there was no observable evidence of such coercion, it is undeniable that other, more subtle forms of

pressure were exerted. For example, one rumour was deliberately circulated to the effect that anyone found "slacking" in terms of picket duty would be placed at the top of a list of union nominees for any future redundancies arising after the return to work.

However, perhaps the most powerful normative device of all was the public derision of miscreants. The weekly distribution of strike pay became a time for shop stewards to ridicule those members who had literally been marked "absent" from picket line duty. Thus, for example, the man who turned up to collect his strike pay despite not having picketed for two weeks listened with acute embarrassment as shop stewards sarcastically informed dozens of his colleagues about the two weeks he had taken off "to spend some time visiting relatives in Australia".

#### 7.4. Summary.

The enduring rank-and-file commitment to the Ansell's strike has been explained partly as a consequence of the way that its central issue was defined: as a life-or-death struggle for trade unionism within the brewing industry. Clearly, however, important social-cognitive processes also played a crucial part in prolonging the dispute. For example, once convinced that Ansell's were "doing a Michael Edwardes", that the threatened closure was a bluff, and that the T.G.W.U. would wholeheartedly support them, the strikers were apt to encode subsequent information in ways which confirmed such beliefs.

The kind of impression management practiced by strike activists had a similar effect, tending to create an atmosphere of undue optimism among the rank-and-file. The effects of normative influence inhibited the public expression of dissent; and the ridiculing of

miscreants discouraged half-heartedness with regard to everyday picketing responsibilities.

## CHAPTER EIGHT. THE DE-MOBILIZATION OF THE STRIKE.

Several illustrations were provided in the previous chapter of how two factors: (i) the tendency for new evidence to be assimilated into existing beliefs, and (ii) the ability of strike activists to manipulate information at their disposal, produced widespread over-confidence in the outcome of the strike.

In complete contrast, the present chapter describes the processes by which such beliefs were undermined as large quantities of contradictory information unexpectedly came to light. We return to many of the conceptual themes introduced in Chapter One to show how the decline of the Ansell's strike is best understood from a social-cognitive perspective.

Two factors will be identified as having been especially significant, namely: the incapacity of the strike leadership to prevent a large quantity of destructive information from reaching the rank-and-file; and their increasing loss of credibility as sources of influence, resulting from the failure of their predictions and the growing realisation that they had been deliberately misinforming their members.

### 8.1. The First Breach of Defence: Unforseen Consequences of Secondary Picketing.

As stated in Chapter Five, the secondary picketing of the Ind Coope brewery in Romford, Essex, commenced on March 27th. Pickets had been despatched in response to revelations that Romford beer was being transported into the Ansell's trading area, the aim being to cut off this supply at source.

It may be recalled that the flying pickets who went to Romford enjoyed very little success in turning back supply waggons containing sugar, malt and gas. It was also emphasised that such people constituted the hard-core activists who were most fervently committed to the objectives of the strike. Thus, when returning home from consecutive days spent picketing in Essex, the original volunteers deliberately exaggerated the extent of their "success".

Prior to the talks at A.C.A.S., the flying pickets were withdrawn to allow negotiations to proceed in an unfettered atmosphere. However, with the breakdown of these talks, it was decided (at the mass meeting of April 17th) not only to resume picketing of the Romford brewery, but also to impose further pressure on Allied Breweries by picketing its Burton brewery as well.

A totally unintended consequence of this policy was that it served to undermine the strikers' morale whilst badly affecting the credibility of their leadership. The major problem was that, due to the ever-increasing demands on manpower involved in the round-the-clock picketing of Burton and Romford, those activists who could initially be depended upon to exaggerate the supposed level of success quickly worked themselves to the point of exhaustion, and it soon became necessary for shop stewards to pressurise "conscripts" into replacing them on the picket lines.

Many of these replacements were older, less committed men who travelled to Essex and Nottinghamshire with far more reluctance than their predecessors. For such individuals, secondary picketing turned out to be an unsavoury experience - nothing at all like the simple, rewarding exercise they had been conditioned to expect. These people were also less inclined to attempt to embroider the "truth": when they returned home, they did not hesitate to pass on uncensored

information to their colleagues.

Such stories soon spread and, before long, disgruntled voices were complaining that: "The Branch Committee has treated us like kids. You'll see one of them down the club and he'll tell you all about the 'marvelous success' they're having at Burton and Romford. But when you get to talk to someone who was actually there...."

Essentially, there were two ways that such disclosures affected the credibility of the strike leadership. First, they demonstrated to the workers how the shop stewards had been wrong to predict that flying picketing would have the immediate effect of "bringing Allied Breweries to a standstill"; and, second, they also revealed that the strike leaders had been deliberately misleading them with regard to important details about the dispute. Henceforward, many strikers were less prepared to accept the arguments of people like the Branch Chairman as valid. Equally, many of them became more uncertain about major aspects of the strike they had previously taken for granted.

## 8.2. The Second Breach of Defence: The T.G.W.U.'s Ballot.

We may recall from Chapter Five that it was against a background of growing disillusionment, caused by the ineffectiveness of flying picketing and the T.G.W.U.'s reluctance to ask their members not to cross picket lines, that each striker unexpectedly received a ballot paper from the Regional Secretary asking him to choose between the options of staying on strike or pushing for an improved cash settlement.

On May 12th, Brian Mathers appeared on B.R.M.B. (independent local radio) to announce that, out of the 702 votes cast in the surprise ballot, 688 strikers indicated their preference for a negotiated



settlement. It is reasonable to speculate that a combination of factors may have contributed to this majority. Clearly, the high source credibility of the Legal Secretary (whose letter was attached to the ballot form) must have had some bearing. Given the importance of his position and undoubted expertise, it would be surprising if some responses were not influenced by his advice.

However, insofar as other pickets were concerned, it was not the letter's recommendations that swayed the way they voted; rather, it was the attitude it symbolised. Such people were now convinced that the T.G.W.U.'s "support" was only superficial after all. They interpreted the ballot as the Union's final attempt to "wash their hands" of the Ansell's strike and, sensing that the T.G.W.U. were preparing to abandon them, saw no other option than to acknowledge defeat.

It should also be realised that, for one category of Ansell's worker at least, the ballot came as a welcome chance to finally let their feelings be known. In the absence of any alternative channels, it presented them with an ideal opportunity to express a dissenting point of view.

Finally, it is a matter of simple arithmetic that no fewer than 300 strikers defiantly refused to participate in the ballot. We may safely assume that this total was largely made up of the central core of activists who were primarily responsible for encouraging and maintaining commitment to the strike.

Plainly, the crucial difference between the T.G.W.U.'s ballot and the earlier attempt by the Company was that, on this latter occasion, shop stewards did not receive advance warning and were therefore unable to sabotage the vote. Consequently, it was also the case that they were powerless to prevent the spread of normative and informational influence arising from the ballot results. Thus, for

perhaps the first time in weeks, people could see that they were not entirely alone in wanting an end to the strike.

### 8.3. How the Strike Leaders Reappraised Their Position.

As one might imagine, the results of the ballot had a traumatic effect on the strike leaders, causing them to realise that the T.G.W.U. were not seriously committed to the strike and, equally significantly, that rank-and-file support was far weaker than they imagined.

One reason why the ballot was so revealing was that the strike leaders tended to conduct their affairs at the H.Q. in an atmosphere of high conformity where the like-mindedness of colleagues was a key factor in helping them to overcome private doubts and inhibiting the expression of personal misgivings about the strike. Moreover, the lack of any organized opposition meant that criticism by solitary individuals could be easily dismissed as "unrepresentative" of the majority view. Not that such criticism occurred frequently: it took strong nerve to break the "normative code" of behaviour and confront a shop steward directly.

Of course, such reticence was in sharp contrast to the behaviour of those rank-and-file activists who followed the daily ritual of bulldozing into the strike H.Q. and demanding to know how they could make themselves most useful. Hence, the strike leaders were constantly exposed to a biased sample of individuals who were overwhelmingly in favour of continued industrial action.

It is also conceivable that the worsening "decision-making climate" had a profound bearing on the attitudes of the strike leaders. A constant awareness that they would ultimately be held responsible for a major loss of jobs and its implications for their political

standing vis a vis the Union may have induced the type of cohesion-maintaining behaviour that we have already identified as synonymous with psychological stress.

Nevertheless, having been alerted to the reality of the situation by the results of the postal ballot, it became apparent to the Branch Committee that their continued leadership of the strike would depend on their ability to replace the notion of re-opening the brewery with a more conservative objective that would retain some appeal in terms of rank-and-file support.

As a first step towards achieving this aim, the Branch Committee set a mass meeting for the day after the ballot results were announced. Once the meeting was underway, the District Secretary, Terry Austin, set about discrediting the Legal Secretary whose letter had been partly responsible for inducing the majority vote. It was stated, for example, that the individual in question had not attended any of the negotiations and was, therefore, unqualified to offer advice to the members. Mr. Austin then went so far as to allege that the letter had not actually been written by the Legal Secretary, but by an unscrupulous forger who was intent on breaking the strike.

Of course, the credibility of the strike leaders had been severely undermined by now and, for this reason, the attempt to discredit the Legal Secretary was greeted with a cynical response. The same kind of cynicism also applied as the Branch Chairman tried to convince his members that other trade unionists throughout Allied Breweries were at last showing signs of rallying round the strike.

However, undeterred by this reception, Mr. Bradley read out a series of letters from Branch officers at Allied's other breweries in Romford, Burton, Alloa, Warrington, Oxford, Wrexham and Leeds, all of which were variations on a single theme: either the Ansell workers

obtain their "rightful" redundancy money or an immediate strike would be called of all Allied Breweries workers. Not content to leave it at this, the Branch Chairman invited his members to consider the implications of the recent serving of an ultimatum to all T.G.W.U. workers at Allied's Tetley Walker brewery in Leeds (where employees were told to accept a series of revised working practices or risk facing the sack). Surely, now, the other branches would finally realise that it was in their collective interests to jointly oppose the Company's action.

We established in Chapter One how novel information that is subjectively perceived as valid can induce a marked change of attitude, and there was no doubt that Bradley's argument was profoundly effective in encouraging a shifting away from the defeatist orientation existing prior to the meeting. Whilst it was inconceivable that the men would have accepted that they could still force the brewery to re-open, there was a positive response to the suggestion that, by staying out on strike for a little while longer, they could secure improvements to the amount of severance pay on offer by the Company and the number of jobs currently available at Aldridge and Gravelly Park. The results of the T.G.W.U.'s ballot were consequently overturned.

It is apparent from the above description of events that the strike leaders were able to re-navigate the course of the strike by using a number of resources to their own advantage. First, they used the formal authority vested in them to ensure that a mass meeting took place as soon as the ballot results were announced in order to arrest what might otherwise have developed into an irretrievable disintegration of the strike. Then, they used the privileged information at their command (i.e., the letters from other branches; news of the deadline at Leeds), in combination with their interpretive and presentational

skills, to deliver a novel, valid argument which successfully persuaded the members to stay out on strike.

The above episode is also extremely informative in terms of the relative weight attached to the content of a persuasive message and the credibility of its source. Clearly, although the strike leaders had recently been discredited, the argument that there was likely to be a sudden resurgence of support from other branches was, nonetheless, regarded as valid. This suggests that, although source effects can certainly modify the degree to which an argument is adopted as valid, its persuasiveness will largely depend on its inherent appeal as a message.

Finally, this example indicates that some degree of rank-and-file commitment is likely to remain for as long as they are able to perceive a realistic objective to aim for and sufficient grounds to believe that it can be attained.

This latter point is adequately borne out by subsequent events in the strike. Whilst it was true, for example, that further negotiations between representatives of Allied Breweries and the T.G.W.U. produced no change in the strikers' position, the latter were not unduly discouraged. This was primarily due to the role of the Branch Chairman who managed to persuade his members that they continued to occupy a far better bargaining position than Allied would ever publically acknowledge.

He pointed out at a mass meeting on May 26th that one key factor in the strikers' favour was that the deadline set for workers in Leeds was due to expire on June 1st, only a few days before Allied's Annual General Meeting was scheduled to take place. Bradley then speculated that the directors would loathe to have to tell shareholders that they had one strike on their hands, let alone two such disputes

running in parallel. According to this logic, Management had sufficient incentive to substantially raise their offer, and this novel perspective had the visible effect of raising fresh optimism for the outcome of negotiations.

The Branch Chairman went on to develop a similar theme at what turned out to be the penultimate mass meeting of the strike (on May 30th). He asked his members to consider why the Company had repeatedly extended its deadlines regarding the re-opening of the distribution depots when they had behaved so ruthlessly in carrying out the threat to close the brewery. Mr. Bradley's own conclusion was that the distribution depots figured very prominently in Allied's commercial strategy, whereas the brewery did not. Thus, provided negotiations could be extended, Management would soon be prepared to "buy off" the strikers with an acceptable amount of compensation.

We stated in Chapter One that, although it would be theoretically possible for this kind of process to carry on indefinitely, it is clear that, in practice, one of two factors will usually bring about an end to the strike: either the leadership will simply run out of ideas to persuade their followers that it is beneficial to their interests to remain on strike; or, the onset of financial hardship will gradually force the rank-and-file into a state of submission. Insofar as the Ansell's strike was concerned, it was the second factor which induced a termination of the stoppage.

#### 8.4. The Termination of the Strike.

The mass meeting of May 30th was made even more notable by the presence of the local Territorial Representative on the T.G.W.U.'s National Executive Council. This esteemed guest was originally due in

London to attend a Council meeting, but agreed to postpone his departure when the Ansells Branch Chairman sent an urgent message informing him that the Regional Secretary was seeking the appropriate authority to cancel all Ansells strike pay.

As a result of the Territorial Representative having been present at the mass meeting, the Ansells strike was duly discussed by the N.E.C., whose final decision it was to formally withdraw the T.G.W.U.'s official backing of the dispute. The Executive's decision was evidently swayed by a recent disclosure that Ansells were willing to employ a more equitable basis for filling future vacancies at the brewery.

Having been deprived of their main means of subsistence, the Ansells workers decided to call off their stoppage rather than face the inevitable prospect of being "starved" back to work. On Saturday, June 6th, they attended a mass meeting at their usual venue, Digbeth Town Hall, and brought the longest brewery strike on record to a formal conclusion.

#### 8.5. Perceptions of Betrayal.

Predictably, many Ansells strikers resented the N.E.C.'s decision. An oft-repeated slogan: "The union has sold us down the river" (c.f. Birmingham Post, June 5th, 1981), epitomised their sense of betrayal. The District Secretary summarised their feelings thus:

"It seems to us that every pressure was put on us to curtail the enthusiasm of the members and to stifle publicity which may have given us assistance."  
(Birmingham Post, June 8th, 1981).

It cannot be denied that the T.G.W.U. gave the Ansells strikers outstanding financial support for the duration of the dispute. However, it is equally difficult to reject the view that the efforts of the

Union's full-time officers (with the exception of Mr. Austin) were mainly geared to ways of bringing the stoppage to a conclusion.

A small number of strikers were inclined to explain the T.G.W.U.'s conduct in terms of an eagerness to avoid being served with a legal injunction under the 1980 Employment Act. However, a significantly larger proportion of their colleagues considered it unrealistic that Britain's largest trade union should be afraid of such a threat. They argued that the Union would simply use its formidable power to close down the docks and bring the nation's supply of goods and services to a standstill. To such people, an alternative explanation seemed more obvious.

This concerned the 5/377 Branch's role in the T.G.W.U.'s temporary suspension from the T.U.C. in 1977. It may be recalled from Chapter Three that this suspension arose as a direct result of the infamous Fox and Goose Affair of 1975 to 1977, involving the blacking of supplies to a non-A.C.T.S.S. member.

Ever since the surprise introduction of the ballot, some strikers had hypothesised that it was the T.G.W.U.'s intention to undermine the strike's effectiveness in order to exact revenge for the embarrassment suffered four years earlier. Such conjecture became a regular topic of picket line conversation and was subsequently raised at mass meetings. Thus, by the end of the dispute, it was widely regarded as the definitive explanation of the T.G.W.U.'s behaviour.

A more neutral explanation of the Union's role would probably involve the active/passive dichotomy described in Chapter One. It seems plausible to assume that, having publically endorsed the strike (whilst privately rejecting any possibility of its success), the full-time officers chose to adopt a "passive" strategy of waiting for the strikers' enthusiasm to subside before proposing a negotiated settle-



ment. However, once it became apparent that the strikers would not easily be discouraged, the T.G.W.U. officials decided to play a more "active" part in inducing an end to the strike, as epitomised by the Union ballot.

The importance of the "Fox and Goose Theory" to the Ansell's strikers cannot be over-emphasised. It is significant that the outcome of the strike failed to convince them that their initial impressions had been wrong. This is because the Fox and Goose Theory helped them to overcome inconsistencies in their arguments, having a stabilizing effect on the original framework of beliefs.

Thus, the ex-employees persisted with the belief that they really had been capable of winning the strike, but did not bargain for the T.G.W.U.'s plan to betray them. They remained equally adamant that the "closure" of the brewery was nothing more than a coercive bluff, but reconciled the apparent discrepancy between belief and evidence by asserting that Allied exploited the Union's indifference: first, to reduce jobs far below the level they would initially have settled for; and, second, to temporarily close the brewery in anticipation of a kinder economic climate.

#### 8.6. Summary.

We saw in this chapter how a decline in commitment towards the Ansell's strike was brought about by a loss of credibility on the part of the strike leaders, and the failure of strike activists to prevent a large influx of destructive information (the lack of success of secondary picketing; the T.G.W.U. ballot).

The continuation of the strike after the introduction of the ballot is best understood in terms of the Branch Chairman's ability to set his members more realistic targets to aim at. The end of the

dispute occurred when the T.G.W.U.'s National Executive Council lifted official support for the strike and withdrew strike pay to the Ansell's workers. It is probable that the stoppage might otherwise have continued until such time that the Branch Chairman was unable to persuade his members of any further merit in staying out on strike.

Explanations of the T.G.W.U.'s questionable conduct during the strike were couched in terms of a popular conspiracy theory defining the Union's so-called betrayal of the workers as an act of revenge for their suspension from the T.U.C. in 1977. This theory played a crucial role in helping the Ansell's strikers to solve the apparent discrepancy between their fundamental beliefs about the strike and the nature of its outcome.

## CHAPTER NINE. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

### 9.1. General Conclusions.

Most psychological explanations of strikes emphasise the impulsive and essentially unreasoned nature of such action. Explanations of this type are, in fact, apsychological, overlooking the capacity of human-beings to think, plan and consciously engage in meaningful activities. In the present study we have applied an alternative social-cognitive approach which focuses on the imagery and perceptions that are an integral feature of industrial disputes, and traces their aetiology through complex social and historical processes.

By applying this perspective in our analysis of the Ansell's Brewery dispute, we were able to see how the strikers were chiefly motivated by a dominant cognitive image suggesting that the entire trade union organization throughout Allied Breweries was seriously at risk. Whilst it is evident that this interpretation was shaped by the arguments of influential actors, such as the Branch Chairman and the District Secretary, it would be erroneous to assume that the Ansell's strike was a gregarious response on the part of an otherwise passive workforce.

Our analysis has demonstrated quite clearly that strikes are initiated when the cognitive inferences made by perhaps a handful of individuals become transformed, via processes of social interaction, into a consensual definition that such action is appropriate. However, we have also emphasised that any interpretation of events nominated by the strike leaders will only be perceived as valid insofar as it is compatible with rank-and-file experience. Our own evidence suggests that relatively more importance is attached to the content of a

persuasive message than to the reputation of its source.

Batstone et al.'s (1978) study into the social organization of strikes addresses itself to this process of social persuasion by argument. The present study has endeavoured to develop some of the ideas introduced by these authors via a more probing examination of the nature and implications of the cognitive imagery evoked during the prelude to a strike; and by showing how such imagery has its origins in the "subjective history" of the social system in which the dispute occurred.

We have repeatedly acknowledged that strike action represents the culmination of an "experiential learning process" based on the subjective interpretation of previous episodes of industrial conflict. More specifically, "It is the actors' experience of that conflict and the lessons they derive from it which largely determine the way they operate the system and set about reshaping it." (Friedman and Meredeem, 1980:pp 340-41). It is an important truism that: "The past is always present in labour relations. And the more bitter the past, the more alive it is in men's memories." (Whyte, 1951:p3).

By adopting this perspective, it has been possible to appreciate why a succession of "cognitive scripts" (the B.L. analogy, the Warrington and Aston "bluffs" and the rebuttal of Management's Manning Efficiency initiatives) exerted such a powerful effect in terms of the key aspects of decision-making. Of further significance, here, was the obvious sense of community (the "family spirit") existing among the workgroup, their strong sharing of workplace values and their deep distrust of Management, all of which had their origins in the conflicts of the past.

If the present study has helped to underline the importance of cognitive imagery as the basis of social judgements, then it has also emphasised the fallibility of human actors in the realm of decision-

making. This was seen to apply, in particular, to the Ansell's workers' misuse of the so-called "lessons of the past" (May, 1973), where they displayed a pronounced tendency to overlook important contextual changes when drawing inferences on the basis of previous situations.

It is often assumed that many of the problems associated with individual decision-making are eradicated within the group context. (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). However, the Ansell's strike offers an example, par excellence, of the way that a centralisation of power and influence, the isolation of the leaders from criticism and dissent, the homogeneity of the group in terms of values and interests, and a decision-making environment of "crisis" proportions can amplify, rather than attenuate, this proneness to error. (Janis and Mann, 1977).

The Ansell's dispute also demonstrates that where a social definition has been accepted by a large number of strikers, it is likely to have a pervasive effect on their future perceptions of events, with all subsequent data being systematically assimilated into the existing framework of beliefs. It was precisely this process, allied to the tendency for strike activists to consciously manipulate information intended for the rank-and-file, which helped to preserve a favourable view of the strike's progress and prevent any depletion of morale.

The fact that a major influx of damaging information (the implications of the T.G.W.U. ballot) was necessary to undermine rank-and-file commitment to the strike is a testimony to the enduring quality of social beliefs. Although one might have expected that the outcome of the dispute would force the strikers to abandon their original conjecture regarding the Company's lack of intention to close the brewery and their own ability to win the strike, such beliefs were merely compromised.

Even in defeat, the Ansell's workers sincerely believed that they

would have won the strike but for their calculated "betrayal" by the T.G.W.U. (which they took to be an act of revenge for the infamous "Fox and Goose Affair" of 1975-1977); and further supposed that, although it was not Allied Breweries' original intention to close Ansell's, the Parent Company quickly seized upon the T.G.W.U.'s "signs of weakness" as a welcome opportunity to reduce their labour force. Conclusions of this type illustrate the general stability of social belief processes. (Steinbruner, 1974).

### 9.2. Comments on the Generality of the Findings.

The relative dearth of analytically-oriented case study material dealing with separate industrial disputes (c.f. Hartley et al., 1983) makes it extremely difficult to assess the generality of our findings. Some basis for optimism is offered by the 1984 miners' strike, even though details of the dispute are still too diffuse to allow a serious application of the social-cognitive approach.

Nevertheless, it has been possible to detect the strong impact of cognitive imagery on rank-and-file supporters of the strike. The likelihood of major redundancies to rival those already witnessed in the steel industry, the possible devastation of whole mining communities and the promise of lives spent hopelessly "on the dole" were all accepted as powerful justifications for the stoppage. Like the Ansell's workers before them, the miners looked upon themselves as a "last line of defence" in the fight for trade union survival. They, too, found inspiration from famous victories (against the Heath government in 1972 and 1974) and benefited from the solidarity and strong sharing of values that stems from an acknowledged community spirit.

As with the Ansell's strike, the miners' dispute was notable for

its lengthiness. Here again, it is possible to account for this common feature in terms of such factors as: the "wartime spirit" aroused by such powerful cognitive imagery, and the abiding influence of strong normative pressure held in check by the skilful evasion of a secret ballot of the membership.

Thus, whilst there are obvious differences in terms of the characteristics of the respective disputes (e.g., the greater use of violence and the unwillingness of a large minority of workers who were not prepared to engage in the miners dispute), there is no reason to suppose that the 1984 coal strike would not be amenable to analysis in terms of the social-cognitive approach.

### 9.3. Recommendations For Industrial Relations Practice.

It was stated in the introduction to this work that one of its main objectives was to provide "useful recommendations" for industrial relations practice. In line with this objective, a number of suggestions are volunteered, based on the Ansell's experience, as to how a repetition of damaging and, arguably, self-defeating strikes of this nature might possibly be avoided.

To begin with, it is quite possible that a greater awareness of the cognitive processes involved in defining complex social situations might be potentially beneficial to industrial relations practitioners on both sides of industry. Thus,

"The realisation that people seize on certain past events as analogies because of the characteristics of these events that are, from a rational standpoint, irrelevant ... would lead the person to search more widely for possible guidelines to action. And an appreciation of the superficial nature of most learning from history would lead decision-makers to think more about the causes of previous outcomes and so be in a better position to determine what past cases are relevant to his current situation." (Jervis, 1976:pp 423-24).

A second practical guideline emerging from the present study would be for union officials and industrial relations personnel to follow Kennedy's (1981:p186) advice and "always suspect the current strategical orthodoxy." As we pointed out in Chapter Six, it is important to realise that one's opponents are also likely to have learned their own lessons of the past, with the result that they will be far more prepared to counteract a previously-successful strategy.

Kennedy(op.cit.:p185) also makes the further point that, unless a decision-making unit has some built-in method "of permitting the advocacy of alternative viewpoints...a selective drawing of lessons from the past is inevitable." It is primarily for this reason that some cognitive theorists have proposed a "multiple advocacy" approach to organizational planning, whereby proponents of diverse points of view whose interests may not be compatible with the remainder of the group are incorporated into the decision-making body. (George, 1974).

One illustration as to how such an approach might be potentially beneficial concerns the decision by the T.U.C.'s General Council to reject the idea of repeating a previously-successful coal embargo against the Baldwin Government in 1926. Although most Council members were originally in favour of this policy, it was Ernest Bevin, the leader of the T.G.W.U., who pointed out that such a repetition would be "ineffective and foolish"; precisely what the Government would expect them to do. As Farman(1974:p114) points out, it is significant that Bevin was arguing with the intention of protecting the jobs of his own members from "blacklegs" and Government volunteers as an uppermost priority.

It is difficult to conceive how a multiple advocacy approach might operate within a trade union context. One simple idea would be for strike leaders to appoint to the role of "devil's advocate" an individual with known misgivings about the strike (e.g., a shop steward



whose section did not stand to benefit by an all-out strike). One obvious disadvantage might be that where such individuals are drawn from the indigenous population, their contentions are likely to be based on the same narrow experience as that of the remainder of their colleagues.

One way around this problem would be to recruit the advice of people outside of the immediate group boundary, such as lawyers, academics and members of uninvolved trade unions. Management often practice this approach by sometimes appointing specialist consultants. (Muensch, 1960). It is certainly possible that, by alerting decision-makers on both sides of industry to the pitfalls of proposed strategies and the availability of an alternative policy, individuals of this type might help to discourage an obsessiveness with any single course of action. Responses are likely to be more "equivocal" (Weick, 1979), with a greater likelihood that contingency plans will be prepared in case events do not turn out as anticipated.

A method of safeguarding the quality of decision-making once the strike was in progress would be to set up special "watchdog committees" with the responsibility of monitoring the progress of any given strike. Presumably, this would be a relatively simple policy for Management to apply, given the availability of managers from departments outside of personnel/industrial relations, subsidiary companies and multi-tiered boards of directors.

On the employees' side, such committees would probably have to consist of local trade union delegates whose main function would be to observe the strike from beginning to end, periodically consulting with the strike leaders in order to ascertain the reasons for their decisions. Recommendations would then be made with regard to obvious errors or oversights but, as a rule, this would probably be the end of the matter.

However, were the stoppage to continue for an unusually long period of time, or should there be any evidence of growing rank-and-file disenchantment with the dispute and/or the way that it was being led, the committee would be empowered to approach shop stewards with a view to obtaining the opinions of a cross section of their members. This might involve a survey, a secret ballot or merely a series of interviews with a sample of the workforce. All results would then be confidentially fed back to the strike leaders, if necessary as a challenge to their existing policies.

It would be naive to suppose that institutional safeguards of this type would not encounter the resistance of elected trade union officials. Most shop stewards would probably see it as an infringement of their autonomy to have to divulge information to "outsiders", particularly if by so doing they might endanger the progress of a strike which they helped to initiate and which therefore carried important implications in terms of political esteem. For this reason, the above proposals are most likely to appeal to those trade unionists who have particular reason to be open to advice - e.g., where the workforce have recently been embroiled in an unsuccessful encounter with the employer and are anxious to avoid a repetition.

Throughout the Ansell's strike, Management consistently projected an image of themselves as that of "helpless bystanders" caught up in an unfortunate situation of someone else's making. It should be recognised, however, that they too played a significant part in the Company's demise, primarily by helping to create an industrial relations climate that was conducive to the closure of the brewery.

Purcell(1979) presents evidence to show how crisis points (or "traumas") occurring in the context of union-management relations (such as the threat of closure) often induce a breakdown of the feelings

of distrust experienced on either side, accompanied by a mutual undertaking to learn to "live together" in order to survive. He further points out, however, that this process is only liable to occur when the threat of closure is regarded as credible and does not work when one side tries to induce trauma on the other.

When viewed from this perspective, it is apparent that although the threatened closure of the brewery may have been designed to provoke a sudden change in the workers' attitudes, it failed to the extent that it was widely regarded as insincere. We saw previously how Anells suffered a major loss of credibility when they backed down under similar circumstances in July, 1980. This "uncommitted" style of management was, therefore, a key factor in the actual closure of the brewery.

A similar criticism can be levelled regarding the sudden change that occurred regarding Management's philosophy towards the handling of disputes. In previous years they had been accustomed to conceding strikes in order to take full advantage of healthy product demand. This attitude was abandoned with the onset of an economic recession, but not before the expectation had been created that strike action would lead to concessionary behaviour on their part. Clearly, whilst it may seem commercially expedient to "buy off" a strike, a concern for the profit motive must be balanced against the objective of securing stable long-term industrial relations.

It is also conceivable that Anells Management could have used more initiative in an attempt to break down the serious distrust that was a feature of industrial relations at the brewery. It is feasible, for example, that some effort might have been made to encourage the setting up of joint working parties in preference to the divisive independent inquiries conducted by both sides (the "shop stewards witchhunt"). Such a gesture may have fostered a greater atmosphere of

trust.

The Ansell's experience of the 1970s suggests that the stability of industrial relations across any given period is very much a product of the amount of discretion used by key representatives on both sides. The November strike of 1971 was followed by a determined attempt on the part of management and trade union personnel to repair the temporary damage to their relationship with the result that, over the next three years, industrial relations were largely cooperative. In October, 1975, a similar strike occurred, but this time the dominant posture of key representatives remained fundamentally conflictual with the result that union-management relations remained negative for the rest of the brewery's lifetime. Clearly, the way in which discretion is exercised by key members of management and the trade union will greatly determine whether long-term industrial relations are primarily harmonious or antagonistic.

#### 9.4. Recommendations For Future Research.

Most case studies of industrial disputes (the present one included) have tended to concentrate on the workers' point of view. It therefore follows that research which delved into the "backstage" activities of management and directors during an industrial dispute would be a welcome contribution to the literature. Given the relatively small number of individuals involved, allied to an apparent obsession on the part of industrial relations and personnel specialists with minutes and memoranda, such a study might reasonably be approached with optimism.

A second area of neglect concerns the possible role of the mass media in shaping actors' perceptions. It is widely acknowledged that

public impressions of industrial disputes are heavily influenced by press and television coverage of them (Hartman, 1979; Morley, 1976), but the effects of news reporting on the morale of those involved and the ways in which the various parties "manipulate" the media to their own advantage are topics requiring closer investigation.

The effects of the striker's domestic life (i.e., his relationships with family, friends and neighbours) on his perceptions and morale also warrants further attention. With this in mind, individuals might be encouraged to keep personal diaries of their feelings across the strike, and their spouse regularly interviewed for the duration of the dispute.

However, it remains apparent that a greater understanding of strikes is most likely to be achieved by concentrating on the processes already identified in the previous chapters of this text, namely, aspects of communication and influence, perception, judgement and decision-making. Future research along these lines ought to include the analysis of speeches and debates during mass meetings and strike committee sessions as well as eavesdropping on picket line conversations and interviewing cross-sections of the actors concerned. The psychologist must also develop the skills of the professional historian in order to recreate the life-history of his subjects and the social system to which they all belong.

Psychologists continue to occupy a marginal position insofar as the study of industrial relations is concerned. This remains somewhat surprising given our earlier comments regarding the much-neglected experiential aspect of strike activity. To recommend that research psychologists focus more attention on this particular area is not to downgrade Nicholson and Kelly's (1980:p283) laudable appeal for a more communal, inter-disciplinary approach; merely to suggest that

they can fruitfully "examine issues of industrial relations in such a way as to complement and enhance, rather than contest the approaches of other disciplines" (Brotherton and Stephenson, 1975:p50), whilst still forging a distinctive contribution of their own.

## APPENDICES.

### Appendix I. Research Methodology.

#### 1. Gaining Access.

The initial attempt to gain access was made during the second week of the dispute. Most strikes are of short duration (Smith, et al., 1978), and it was assumed that the dispute would be settled before a reasonable attempt at study could be made. A brief pilot study was therefore planned but, as the situation developed, the opportunity to perform a more extensive study became apparent. Ansells Brewery is located a mere two miles away from the University of Aston. The "logistics" of studying the strike were, therefore, straightforward.

First contact was made with a group of pickets assembled outside of the Company's main administration block and, shortly afterwards, with some fifty of their colleagues on the brewery's main gate. Psychologists have learned to be wary of such situations (Lewicki and Alderfer, 1973) but, on this occasion, the strikers were extremely helpful when approached.

Although the pickets raised no objections to the research, they nonetheless suggested that appropriate permission be obtained from their Branch officers before proceeding any further. An interview was therefore arranged with the Branch chairman, his Vice-chairman and a number of senior shop stewards who were informed of the study's broad aims (ie, to "examine the experience, attitudes and perceptions of people on strike"). After due consideration, the necessary approval was granted for the researcher to conduct interviews and observe activities for the remainder of the dispute.

## 2. The Method of Study.

The study quickly developed into a fully-fledged exercise in participant observation, involving daily attendance on picket lines for periods of sometimes twelve hours or more. During this time, unstructured interviews were conducted and personal observations made. As the strike progressed, the pickets were organized into "gangs" of six, each gang being required to operate a four-hour shift on every alternate day. This tended to produce an extremely rapid turnover of people, thus rendering it possible to monitor the views of a large number of individuals for the complete duration of the strike.

A request to tape-record interviews was received with unqualified alarm. Many pickets were afraid that cassette recordings might "accidentally fall into the wrong hands" with the possibility of their voices being identified. (Interestingly, "wrong hands" often implied Trade Union as well as Management personnel). Therefore, some guarantee of anonymity was a necessary component of the "implicit research contract".

Within this context, the proposed distribution of questionnaires was generally considered acceptable. However, when a specimen questionnaire was submitted to shop stewards for their approval (see Appendix II(i)), it was rejected outright on the grounds that the results might somehow be procured by Management or the Press. Some members of the rank-and-file were candid enough to suggest that the stewards' "real" motive was to suppress any information that might (a) damage their own personal standing, or (b) indicate some degree of pessimism regarding the outcome of the strike.

As the conflict intensified, the opportunity arose to accompany the strikers on regular "flying picket" or "intelligence-



gathering manoeuvres (e.g., the tracing of "scab" beer to its source). These activities were in stark contrast to other, more mundane aspects of the research such as attending mass meetings and paying regular visits to the strike "headquarters" (situated in Perry Barr, Birmingham). However, one should not underestimate the importance of this latter routine. The H.Q., in particular, was the hub of all communication lines: a place where the very latest information was received and distilled prior to dissemination among the rank-and-file. Clearly, it was vital to observe as much of this process as possible at first hand.

This general approach was supplemented by the collection of the various documentation and correspondence issued by both sides. Trade Union files were scrutinised for information relating to tactics and decision-making, and relevant historical information was obtained from local library archives. Local and national newspaper reports were systematically collected, and hourly independent local radio news bulletins (B.R.M.B.) were transcribed for future use.

No contact was made with Management during the dispute, lest this might jeopardise relations with the strikers. Similarly, full-time officers of the T.G.W.U. were not approached until after the strike in case they should object to the research and instruct their members not to cooperate. Subsequently, however, representatives of both parties responded generously to requests for help and advise.

Finally, a hastily-conducted pilot study was made of local public opinion, based on Appendix II(ii). Interviewees were selected on a random basis, the objective being to obtain a quota sample of responses at a later date. However, the survey was subsequently abandoned, (a) because it was far too time-consuming in relation to other priorities, and (b) because of its questionable relevance to the research as a whole.

### 3. Interviews and Observations.

Unstructured interviews with Ansell's strikers were carried out in all types of situation (on picket lines, in cafes and public houses, on the backseats of motor cars, or in the cramped confines of a hostel or spare bedroom that constituted temporary accommodation for the night). Usually, responses were recorded verbatim, but sometimes the spontaneous nature of the conversation meant that details had to be memorised and written up afterwards.

Observations of events were also written up mainly as they occurred; but, during especially hectic phases of activity, it was often found easier to suspend note-taking until the action relented. The researcher's own recollection of events was then checked against the recollections of other eye-witnesses who also happened to be present. This helped to ensure that all observations were as accurate as possible.

### 4. Evaluating the Method of Study.

The merits of participant observation are considerable, and will be emphasised in due course. Nevertheless, this form of methodology has several potential drawbacks, some of which we acknowledge below.

One principal danger of participant observation is that it is a highly obtrusive research method which may have the unintended effect of "contaminating" the environment under study. For example, the observer's very presence might induce his subjects to "act up" or behave unnaturally. Even the subtlest gesture: a nod, a frown or a disapproving shake of the head, might convey a preference for a particular form of response. (Douglas, 1976). Equally, questions can be tailored, albeit unwittingly, to invite a specific answer. (Cohen

and Taylor, 1976).

There is a further possibility that the sample of interviews taken will be heavily biased in favour of "pushier" individuals who are particularly eager to express their views. (Against this, it should be said that this can also prove beneficial, as on those occasions when the researcher was briefly absent from the picket line and required dependable informants to help keep track of events).

Finally, there is a danger of over-rapport. (Miller, 1952). The very act of associating with fellow human-beings and sharing their experiences makes for a climate in which sympathies are aroused. Denzin(1978) makes the point that such sentiments eventually wear off, enabling the researcher to look more dispassionately at his data. However, it is unknown to what extent sensations of loyalty can ever be entirely put aside or how abiding they may become.

By knowing of these pitfalls in advance, it was possible to take some steps to avoid them. Thus, every effort was made to: (a) counteract the effect of non-verbal cues by phrasing all questions as impassively as possible; constantly examine the accuracy and selectivity of personal observations; (c) focus equal attention on "introverted" subjects who might otherwise have been overlooked; and (d) avoid the formation of close personal friendships. Whilst all of these precautions were taken, it is impossible to evaluate their effect.

However, even accepting the possibility of such drawbacks, the benefits accruing from participant observation remain impressive. For example, one of the chief virtues of this methodology is that it promotes the development of trust between the researcher and his subjects. It is unlikely that the strikers would have been so frank and informative had they not learned to look upon the researcher as someone they were prepared to trust.

Participant observation also helps to eliminate deception. Gergen(1978) warns psychologists to be on their guard against the so-called "enlightenment effect". This denotes an increased public awareness regarding social scientific theories and research techniques which may cause subjects to modify their behaviour whenever they are under surveillance. Thus, a key advantage of employing participant observation during the strike was that the possibility of being deceived by initial appearances was overcome by observing the subjects' behaviour in a variety of different situations.

Douglas(1976:p112) makes the point that, "when one's concern is the experience of people, the way they feel, think and act, the most truthful, reliable, complete and simple way of getting that information is to share their experience." It is almost certainly the case that richer, more vivid insights were obtained by this method than there would have been had a more structured methodology been applied.

The methodology employed was also truly generative. (Gergen, op.cit.). "Talk" continues to be an underrated commodity insofar as psychologists are concerned (Armistead, 1974), but to actually listen to how the strikers defined their situation - in categories of their own particular choosing - was highly educational. Of course, too much talk can be dangerous since key points may be lost in the deluge. However, it should be remembered that, when conducting this kind of research,

"...the individual is continuously making conscious sense out of it in terms of earlier categories and ideas. It is these conscious categorisations that he remembers best when he writes them down at the end of the day. But at the same time he has been experiencing fleeting perceptions, feelings and ideas which are particular to the new situation. As he experiences these more, he becomes more conscious of them and begins to consciously categorise them either in terms of the members', or, if they have no language to describe them, in terms he himself creates." (Douglas op.cit.:p120).

Implicit in the above remarks is some acknowledgement of the adaptability of participant observation as a method of study. One serious disadvantage of many quantitative methodologies is that, once the null hypothesis has been confirmed, the research is usually suspended, awaiting the formulation of an alternative hypothesis test. (Hendrick, 1977). However, when faced with a similar dilemma, the participant observer merely continues his search for an alternative theoretical explanation.

Finally, it is perhaps fair to say that participant observation remains a somewhat stigmatized approach. Graduate students in social psychology soon learn that adherence to dominant values stressing quantification and control are a prerequisite to success. (Ring, 1967: p119). However, any primary misgivings arising from this thought are soon compensated by the sense of achievement and satisfaction one derives from allowing strikers the opportunity to relate their own unique experience, and by enjoying a close personal involvement in such an untamed social phenomenon. (Batstone et al., 1978:p17; Lane and Roberts, 1971:p19).

Appendix II. Questionnaires.

(i) Draft copy of questionnaire rejected by Ansell's shop stewards.

As many of you will already be aware, I have been attending the picket lines for quite some time, talking to people and collecting information for my PhD on strikes. However, I have since felt the need to employ a more systematic method of collecting data, and have devised a short questionnaire in the hope that you will be kind enough to cooperate. Feel free to make your answers as long or as short as you wish, or even skip them altogether if they strike you as too personal. It goes without saying that all responses will be treated as strictly confidential.

1. How old are you?

Under 21	<input type="checkbox"/>
21-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
31-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
51-60	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 60	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What is your marital status?

(a) Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Widower	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Do you have any dependent children?

Yes/No

If "yes", how many? ....

4. How long have you been working at the brewery?

(a) 5 years or less	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) 6-10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) 11-15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) 16-20 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Over 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Which section of the brewery do you work in?

Please state .....

6. Have you ever been on strike before? At Ansell's? Elsewhere?

Yes/No

At Ansell's/Elsewhere

continued....

7. Based on your own experience, what are the most pleasant and unpleasant aspects of being on strike?

Most pleasant

Most unpleasant

8. To what extent do you depend on the following sources for information about the strike?

	Almost entirely	Most of the time	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
(a) Union bulletins					
(b) Union meetings					
(c) Rumour/word of mouth					
(d) Television					
(e) Local Radio					
(f) Local Press					
(g) Left-wing Press					
(h) Workers' Power bulletin					
(i) Other					

If "i", please specify .....

9. Which out of the following local newspapers do you read, and how often do you read them?

	Every day	Most days	Occasionally	Rarely	Every Sunday	Never
(a) Birmingham Post						
(b) Birmingham Evening Mail						
(c) Express and Star						
(d) Sunday Mercury						

Please give the name(s) of any other local paper(s) you read

.....

10. How satisfied have you been with the conduct of your union reps at the following levels during the strike?

	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied	Un-decided	Dis-satisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
(a) Branch					
(b) District					
(c) Divisional					
(d) Regional					
(e) National					

continued....

11. To what extent are the public on your side? Do you have

- (a) Total support?
- (b) Majority support?
- (c) Partial support?
- (d) Very little support?
- (e) No support at all?


12. Which of the following possible outcomes to the strike would you consider most FAVOURABLE? Which do you consider most LIKELY?

- (a) Return to work on Management's terms
- (b) Return to work on Union's terms
- (c) Return to work on negotiated terms
- (d) Closure of brewery/ex-gratia payment
- (e) Closure of brewery/redundancy payment
- (f) Other

Most Favourable	Most Likely

If "g", please specify .....

13. What is your opinion of Management's conduct during the strike?

Please state .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

14. How do you personally justify the strike? Why do you think it was necessary?

Please state .....

.....

.....

.....

Finally, please allow me to thank you for your cooperation.



(ii) Pilot survey of local public opinion. (Conducted in Aston area of Birmingham, February, 1981).

(a) Pilot questionnaire.

1. (Primer question). Are you aware that a strike is in progress at Ansell's?

Yes/No

INTRODUCTION

At present, I am doing research on strikes as part of my PhD studies at the University of Aston Management Centre, and am interested in the views of local people regarding the Ansell's dispute. Would you mind answering a few short questions?

2. What do you think is (are) the main issue(s) involved in the Ansell's workers' decision to strike?

- (a) Their rejection of the 4-day week
- (b) Their refusal to accept a wage-cut
- (c) Opposition to planned redundancies/ revised working practices
- (d) Retaliation concerning disciplinary measures by management
- (e) Persuading the Company to re-open the brewery
- (f) Other reason(s)


If "f", please state what you consider the main issue(s) to be.

.....  
.....  
.....

3. What is the extent of your sympathy toward the strike? Do you

- (a) Feel sympathetic toward the strike?
- (b) Feel strongly sympathetic toward the strike?
- (c) Feel opposed to the strike?
- (d) Feel strongly opposed to the strike?
- (e) Feel undecided either way?


continued....

4. If you had to nominate one of the following reasons why the workers went on strike, which one would you choose?

- (a) Because of the influence of a small minority
- (b) Because their emotions got the better of them
- (c) Because something in their "make up" makes them prone to go on strike
- (d) Because they failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation
- (e) Because it was the rational thing to do under the circumstances

Finally, please allow me to thank you for your cooperation in the completion of this questionnaire.

(b) Survey results.

1. Public perceptions of the main issue(s) involved.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>%</u>
(a) Rejection of 4-day week	21
(b) Resistance to wage-cut	63
(c) Opposition to redundancies/ revised working practices	7
(d) Retaliation over disciplinary measures	5
(e) Re-opening of brewery	26
Total	122

(N=57)

2. Level of public sympathy for the strike.

<u>Extent of sympathy</u>	<u>%</u>
(a) Feel sympathetic	11
(b) Feel strongly sympathetic	4
(c) Feel undecided	11
(d) Feel opposed	38
(e) Feel strongly opposed	36
Total	100

(N=57)

3. Public explanations of the strike.

<u>Reason nominated</u>	<u>%</u>
(a) The influence of a small minority	12
(b) Emotions got the better of them	54
(c) Something in their "make up"	18
(d) Failed to appreciate gravity of situation	5
(e) Rational response under circumstances	11

Total 100

(N=57)

Appendix III. Three stages of The Birmingham Brewery Development Plan.

(1) 1st draft agreement (The Bades-Fairbairn Letter).

17th January, 1972.

Dear Mr. Fairbairn,

**BIRMINGHAM BREWERY DEVELOPMENT PLAN.**

As a result of several discussions between the Company and the Transport and General Workers' Union, it was finally agreed on Thursday, 2nd December, 1971, that the development of the Birmingham Brewery between now and 1980 would proceed as follows:-

1. The Bottling Stores at No.1 Brewery will cease production by April / May 1973 with the exception of "C" Line which may continue until January, 1974.
2. The production of Caskettes will continue at Birmingham after bottling has ceased and not be transferred to Burton. Subject to its introduction to the trade, the Midland production of the D.D. Party Can will be carried out at Birmingham. Dependent on a satisfactory trade growth a new Casketta Filling Machine will be installed, though not necessarily in the present Casketta area. Initially one shift of 13 employees will be engaged on Casketta production; however, if trade increases a second shift of 13 employees will be allocated.
3. An investigation by the Company and Trade Union will be made into those areas of Engineering Maintenance where Contractors are employed (such as painting and insulation) to determine the possibility of employing Company labour. Any decision would be influenced by future type and design of building and equipment.
4. A retail delivery warehouse extension at Aston and a Distribution Depot at Aldridge will be built to take over deliveries currently carried out from the Birmingham Breweries and to cope with expansion in the future. Both the Retail Store and the Depot will each have a complete inventory of beers and will, where appropriate, carry out mixed deliveries.

Initially, both warehouses will be built approximately the same size. The Retail Store will be maintained at full capacity with the Depot delivering the balance of present trade and any future expansion. At the commencement this will mean approximately two thirds of present trade from the Retail Store and one third from Aldridge.

continued....



5. The No. 1 Brewery will be modernised by purchasing land in Portland Street for the construction of new processing facilities as an extension to the Keg Plant.
6. After a period of time all production will be concentrated into No. 1 Brewery and No. 2 Brewery will close. While it must be recognised that with the changing pattern of trade it is obvious that No. 2 Brewery will ultimately close, the Company will endeavour to run it down over a period longer than that originally contemplated. The Company has reconsidered its plans and is thinking in terms of a seven year term rather than the 4-5 years previously envisaged.

The ultimate role of No. 1 Brewery will be the production of beer for the Keg Plant, Caskettes (except D.D.) and Retail Road Tankers.

7. The present establishment of 933 full time industrial employees will be reduced by 1980 to 683.

This reduction will take place in two phases, namely:-

- i) The Company will limit the overall reduction of jobs to no more than 100 by January 1974. This will be after allowing for the preceding paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5. If a greater number of employees wish to take advantage of paragraph 8 below before January 1974, the Company will be prepared to discuss the matter with the Union.
  - ii) By 1980 there would be a further 150 less jobs and these numbers would be dealt with by natural wastage, voluntary redundancy and retirements.
8. From the 3rd January 1972 any full time permanent employee may leave the Company's employment on a voluntary redundancy basis if her / his job can be filled from the existing labour force.
  9. Redundancy terms to be discussed and agreed with the Trade Union.
  10. The Trade Union will provide full cooperation on both job flexibility and the efficient operation of the Company's business.
  11. Discussions will take place regarding the programme and manning levels which, when finalised, will be attached as appendices to this document.

Yours sincerely,

(Robert Eades).

continued....



(ii) 2nd draft agreement

BIRMINGHAM BREWERY DEVELOPMENTS.

Since the Company / Trade Union discussions in 1971, and subsequently the agreement to various changes as in the letter of agreement exchanged between Mr. Eades and Mr. Fairbairn dated 17th January 1972, certain events such as alterations in pattern of trade have taken place, and it is considered that agreed amendments within the content of the original letter are now necessary:-

The following is proposed:

1. With the closure in Spring 1973 of the Burslem Depot, there will be a rearrangement of delivery areas in the Midlands, resulting in approximately 2,000 brls / week additional trade being transferred to Birmingham / Aldridge for Retail Delivery.
2. In Spring 1974 further barrelage (est. 500 brls / week) will be transferred to Birmingham / Aldridge for Retail Delivery.
3. The trunking of Packaged Beers ex Burton into Aldridge / Birmingham will be carried out by the Birmingham based fleet, subject to flexibility at Peak Periods and economic scheduling.
4. From 1st January 1973, or as soon after is practical (but prior to the opening of Aldridge Depot), No. 2 Brewery will only produce C & P Mild Beers for Retail Bulk deliveries and handle all Birmingham beer returns.
5. From 1st January 1973, the brewing of P.M. and L.A. will be transferred to Burton.
6. From 1st January 1973, or as soon after as practical (but prior to the opening of Aldridge Depot), the brewing and racking of P.A. will be transferred to No. 1 Brewery.
7. From 1st January 1973, the labour force at No. 2 Brewery is reduced by an agreed number.
8. From 1st January 1973, or as soon after as is practical (but prior to the opening of the Aldridge Depot), bottling at No. 1 Brewery will cease, except for Aston Retail Fleet requirements (with certain exceptions to be discussed).
9. The Bottling Department from 1st January 1973 will be reduced by an agreed number.
10. Bottled Beer requirements for Aldridge, Marshfield, etc. to be ex Burton (with certain exceptions to be discussed).
11. On 1st January 1974, No. 2 Brewery will cease all production.
12. In Spring 1974. bottling at Birmingham will cease completely.

continued....



13. The Birmingham / Aldridge Developments will entail new systems of working. These will require revised methods of payment. When these Developments take place, employees affected will have full earnings protection until the revised systems and methods of payment are agreed and implemented, or for a period of up to twelve months from the change, whichever is the sooner.

The above applies on the understanding that the required work is completed satisfactorily.

Local detailed discussions will take place on this subject.

14. In Paragraph 7 of the Messrs. Eades / Fairbairn letter of 17th January 1972, a final establishment in 1980 of 683 Industrial employees is stated. It is agreed the figure will be jointly reviewed as Developments occur and the Company is prepared to consider an upward revision if proved necessary.
15. The redundancy terms to be those negotiated and agreed with the Trade Union on 20th April 1972.

(Signed)

15th December, 1972.

(iii) 3rd draft agreement.

#### BIRMINGHAM BREWERY DEVELOPMENT.

Since the Company / Trade Union discussions in the Autumn of 1972, and the subsequent revision on 15 December 1972 to the original Messrs. Eades / Fairbairn letter of the 17 January 1972, it is now considered necessary to make further amendments which are listed below:-

1. To meet the requirements of our Marketing Policy the following changes will be made in the arrangements for the brewing and packaging of beers at Burton and Birmingham Breweries respectively:-
  - 1.1. Birmingham will brew all of the Ansells Bitter required for the Ansells marketing region and Burton and Birmingham will package the same for their own retail fleets and Depots.
  - 1.2. Burton will brew all of the Ansells Pale required for the Ansells Marketing region and Burton and Birmingham will package the same for their own retail fleets and Depots.
  - 1.3. Birmingham will brew and package all of the Ansells Dark Mild required for the Ansells Marketing region. In due course the sale of XXX and Ind Coope Drum Mild will be discontinued in this region.



- 1.4. As from a date to be agreed after the opening of the new Aston Distribution Warehouse, Birmingham will package the draught Skol to be distributed by the Aston retail fleet.
  - 1.5. DDD for the Aston retail fleet will continue to be packaged at Aston. DDD for all the other Birmingham Depots (being Aldridge, Marshfield and Haverfordwest Depots) will be packaged at Burton.
  - 1.6. Where beer is moved from one location to another for packaging it will normally be moved in a "bright" condition.
  2. The changes described in (1) above will be phased in to ensure smooth continuity of trade.
  3. The production of Super Draught Special for Scotland will cease at the end of the Financial Year (September 1973).
  4. The future of Caskettes will be as per the letters of the 17th January 1972 and the 15th December 1972.
  5. No. 2 Brewery will close as agreed on the 1st January 1974.
  6. Retail bulk beer will continue as agreed, although due to customer demand, this could be changed.
  7. It is anticipated that the Aston Distribution Warehouse will open during October 1974 and from the date of opening, bottling at Aston will be phased down and will cease completely in January 1975. During this phasing down there will be some redeployment of labour. In the meantime, bottling will continue at Aston for the Aston retail fleet only, plus Special and Nut Brown for other locations.
  8. As soon after the opening of the Aston Distribution Warehouse as is practicable, the number of keg racking heads at Aston will be increased by 10 in two stages. This of itself will not necessarily involve an increase in the production or maintenance labour forces in this area.
  9. In order to ensure that all the normal retail deliveries required to service all of the customers in the area served by the Aston / Aldridge retail fleet can be completed in 20 working days in any 4-week period, it is proposed to increase the number of employees in the Aston / Aldridge Distribution Fleet by 50. This will mean that the Distribution Fleet employees will total 315 (excluding Grants and Maintenance).
- The T.U. agree to cooperate in providing maximum customer services at all times.
10. The opportunity for voluntary redundancies will remain as per the agreement made on the 17th January 1972. With the developments over the last 12 months, the Company now considers we are out of

continued....



a compulsory redundancy situation, providing certain employees who would otherwise have been made redundant accept jobs that are available.

Signed on behalf of the Company:      Signed on behalf of the Union:

(Brewery Director & Manager).  
(Personnel Manager).

(West Midlands Divisional Officer).  
(Branch Chairman).

18th September, 1973.

on the first of referring to the situation of the Company feeling that... particularly the paragraph... would request that the Company... further copies of the relevant... for Clause 2... refers to A.C.P.S. and... of which were sent.

be able to see that Clause 1... clearly that Clause 2 or for that matter any... agreement is not relevant to the... case.

ask that as many copies as possible of the... as there were in the last... situation could be identified and... that a company agreement is...

Appendix IV. Letter from Ansell's' Branch Chairman to Company's Head Brewer, June 11th., 1976.

11th June, 1976.

Dear (Head Brewer),

Following the article on the front page of this morning's Morning Advertiser referring to the situation at the Fox and Goose and the subsequent anti-Company feeling that this has generated amongst my members, particularly the paragraph claiming we are in breach of agreement, I would request that the Company again sends out to all concerned further copies of the relevant agreement, so that everyone can see for themselves that Clause 2 of the mentioned agreement categorically refers to A.C.T.S.S. and does not commit the T. and G.W.U. of which we are members.

Also they would be able to see that Clause 17 section (b) makes it perfectly clear that Clause 2 or for that matter any other part of that agreement is not relevant to the grievance at the Fox and Goose.

I would ask that as many copies as possible of the agreement be circulated without delay as there were in the last instance so that the situation could be clarified and eliminates the conviction of my members that a Company spokesman is deliberately lying to the Press.

Yours sincerely,

(Branch Chairman).

continued...

Appendix V. Letter from Ansell's Managing Director to all employees, May 18th., 1979.

18th May, 1979.

Dear Employee,

**Manpower Efficiency**

Last Monday, 14th May, the Company opened discussions with your Trade Union Representatives about improving manning efficiency through voluntary redundancy. The reasons for this are:-

- The average wage costs in Ansell's Brewery and Distribution are the highest of any Brewery in the country. According to the latest Department of Employment Earnings Survey, the average wages in the Brewing and Malting Industry was £92.30 per week. If earnings (including Earnings Protection and Job and Finish in Traffic) are to be maintained, let alone improved, we need to achieve our production and distribution targets with fewer men. We believe that we can do this with something like 130 fewer men but we are open to discussion. This method of improving efficiency was promised anyway by the Trade Union in previous negotiations.
- There is £20 million invested in our Brewery and Distribution Depots and this is producing virtually no financial return. You will know that we must achieve an adequate profit so that money can be reinvested in capital equipment and machinery for our future prosperity. We must produce this ourselves.
- Because Ansell's is not generating sufficient profits we are having to borrow money from the Allied Breweries group in order to pay for capital expenditure this year. We shall not be able to continue to do this in the future because our Parent Company will not provide it.

Against this background the Company commenced discussion on non replacement of those who leave and voluntary redundancy. We suggested to the Trade Union Representatives that the dialogue should continue at departmental level so as to obtain an understanding about the manning efficiencies which could be achieved. Indeed, the discussion should cover other ways also of improving financial performance as was envisaged in the productivity negotiations.

However, the Shop Stewards chose not to pursue the dialogue in this way and have called an employee meeting on Monday, 21st May. As the Company has only just opened discussions on a topic which was agreed in last year's negotiations, it is surprising that Stewards have chosen to hold this meeting during normal working hours. Once again production and distribution will be disrupted, we shall fail in our service to our customers before a bank holiday and provide another bonus to our competitors.

continued...

The Company takes the view that there are some employees who may wish to leave on redundancy terms purely on a voluntary basis. It is difficult to understand why the shop stewards would apparently wish to prevent employees taking this opportunity. It is said that this might result in increased work loads for employees that remain and some inroad into shorter working week arrangements. The answer to this is that these points are completely untested until the discussion takes place within Departments. Such areas of concern would form the basis of our coming negotiations. It is untrue to say, as the shop stewards allege, that the Company has made up its mind. There is a great deal to be discussed.

The purpose of discussion was to ensure the future prosperity of industrial employees and of all who work for Ansell's. The Trade Union have asked continually that they be consulted, and this is what has occurred. The meeting called for Monday is certainly premature, and possibly unnecessary and can only lead to loss of wages on that day.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED,

(Managing Director).



Appendix VI. Correspondence from Management to all Ansell's employees: January 2nd to May 20th, 1981.

(i) Letter dated January 2nd.

2nd January, 1981

Dear Employee,

Suspension of Guaranteed Week

The Company has kept employees and their Trade Union Representatives fully informed during recent weeks about the reduction in trade, which has been taking place due to the recession in industry. The Board's decision last September not to increase prices before January, 1981, has had a beneficial effect in maintaining our business, but even so we have not been able to escape some reduction. It is in line with this, of course, that steps are being taken by agreement to reduce the numbers employed both Staff and Hourly Paid.

In the first couple of months or so of any year we always experience a seasonal reduction in trade. At the beginning of 1981 due to the industrial recession and an inescapable increase in prices, the Company will experience the same difficulty but on an increased scale. It will, therefore, be necessary to introduce short-time working, and accordingly the guaranteed week set out in the Plant Agreement will be suspended from Sunday, 11th January, 1981. The precise effect of this short time working in your case will be communicated to you by your Manager / Supervisor. At the same time weekend overtime will be discontinued subject to certain exceptions, such as Maintenance, notified by Management. The short time working will take the form of a four day week with each Monday being the day of lay-off. Employees will be eligible for a statutory payment of £8 per day of lay-off for up to five days in any period of three months provided that they comply with the reasonable requirements by Management, do not unreasonably refuse suitable alternative work and are not involved in a trade dispute. Further details regarding payment for work done etc., are being published in Works Notices.

The Company hopes that the period of short time working will be as short as possible, and given co-operation to maintain, or preferably increase our share of the trade, we would hope that the period of time during which this action is necessary will not be prolonged.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELL'S BREWERY LIMITED.

(Personnel Director).

(ii) Letter dated January 9th.

9th January, 1981

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN TO ALL ANSELLS EMPLOYEES

I feel that the time has come when I should say something to you on how Ansell's has been doing recently and what the future holds.

Our price holding exercise during the Autumn was a considerable success so far as the Free Trade was concerned, and we know that in October, where the rest of the Market in the Midlands and Wales fell by more than 9%, our own Sales were less than 1% down. The success in the Tied Trade has, however, been very much more limited and although we had a better Christmas than we expected at one time, the barrelage we sold was less than last year.

In January, as you all know, we have had to put up our prices in order to pay for all the wages and salary increases that have taken place during the last 12 months and the increased costs for all the services and goods that we buy. We put our prices up in January last year and the level of our trade in that month was less than three quarters of the trade we enjoy in other normal trading months of the year. This year, with the current recession, we anticipate that our January trade will be even worse. This will mean that the Company will almost certainly make a loss in January and probably in February as well. Therefore we have got to take action which will minimise that loss. If we fail to take these steps, then we shall fail to provide the money to repair our pubs and Brewery and Depots, and to improve on what we have. Drastic action has, therefore, had to be taken and this has meant the introduction of the 4-day week on what I certainly hope is a temporary basis. We have taken this step as the least painful of a number of difficult alternatives in order to ensure that when Sales pick up we can return quickly to normal working with our Market Share intact.

If, however, we disrupt the services to our customers during the coming weeks so as to lose much of the Market Share we have gained from our price holding exercise, then the extent of short time working or whatever other alternatives we may have to consider will be that much longer. The Company simply cannot afford to meet all its overheads whilst trade is running at a level of less than three quarters of what it does in other months.

I would like to be able to predict the length of time that this situation will have to last, but I find that difficult to do so. What I can assure you is that Management is prepared to discuss with all Elected Representatives the level of trade demand which needs to be achieved so that each Department can return to a full working week.

The decision which I had to take with regard to this matter was not one I liked or wanted to make, but if we are to preserve the strength

continued....

of Ansell's and its beers through a very difficult trading period, continue to provide good employment for a large number of people and remain profitable, then unpalatable decisions have to be made.

The Beer Industry has not seen a down turn in trade as has occurred in the last six months for 30 years. We have enjoyed almost continual growth year on year for over 20 years and, therefore, it has not been necessary previously to consider such action. The slump now affecting the Country is quite different to anything we have seen for at least half a century, and, therefore, the steps that have to be taken to manage that situation are different. I ask you to accept that the 4-day week will not last any longer than is absolutely necessary - that I fully realise that those of you affected have commitments to your families and mortgages, hire purchase, etc., that have to be met, and, therefore, I will do my best to ensure that it is as short-lived as possible.

Please may I wish you all a successful 1981.

(Chairman and Managing Director).

(iii) Letter dated January 17th.

17th January, 1981

Dear Employee,

REDUNDANCY NOTICE

As you know, discussions have been taking place between the Company and Trade Union Representatives on the need to improve efficiency and reduce labour costs in the interests of keeping the price of our products down. The Company believed that the objectives could have been met by a period of short time working, but that approach has been frustrated by the Trade Union calling a strike. Since labour costs cannot be reduced in that way, the Company finds it necessary to reduce the number of people employed, and I regret to inform you that your job is now, therefore, redundant, and your employment is being terminated for that reason.

This letter is to give you notice of termination of employment commencing Monday, 19th January, 1981 and expiring on (-) (i.e., the statutory minimum notice according to your length of service). Work will be available to you until Friday, the 20th February should you wish to avail yourself of it, and you will be paid for work performed during that time. On that day you will be paid the balance of monies due to you in lieu of notice, if any. This notice is issued by Ansell's Brewery Limited on behalf of Allied Breweries (U.K.) Limited.

You will be entitled to the statutory redundancy payments under the Employment Protection Act and the Company's additional Severance Terms under the Birmingham Agreement dated the 20th April, 1972. Details will be sent to you shortly. You will also be notified of your pension entitlements if any, and resettlement allowance in accordance with the applicable rules if you have not found other employment by the time your notice expires.

In conclusion, may I say that the Company deeply regrets the action which it has now been forced to take in this matter and I would extend the Company's best wishes to you for the future.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELL'S BREWERY LIMITED.

(Personnel Director).



(iv) Letter dated January 19th.

19th January, 1981

Dear Employee,

Resumption of Work

The Company met Trade Union Representatives on 18th January, 1981, when the Representatives indicated they were prepared to resume work as the four day week was no longer in dispute.

The Company stated that if employees wished to resume work they could do so provided they understood and abided by the terms over-leaf.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Personnel Director).

ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED

Terms of Resumption

1. No victimisation.
2. No blacking of plant and equipment.
3. Co-operation in the implementation of the reduced manning levels notified to the Trade Union on 16th January, 1981, which will be achieved by means of redundancies as necessary.
4. Volunteers for redundancy will be accepted in place of those declared redundant compulsorily.
5. The redundancy exercise will be completed by 18th April, 1981, if necessary compulsorily.
6. For this purpose the Company will require changes in working practices and redeployment of labour in various parts of the Company (referred to in Item 3 above) particularly the following:-
  - a) Reduction in Engineering personnel as specified.
  - b) Use of single elevator in Keg Plant.
  - c) Empties and Fulls Department - integration of Yard Gang manpower (non drivers) with Production Warehouse men.
  - d) Redundancies at Gravelly Park (other than Warehouse) to be in the Bottle Beer section.
  - e) Redeployment of Caskette labour to other Departments as required.

7. Elimination of weekend overtime in Distribution and Delivery (including My Cellar) except as otherwise required.
8. The Company to continue to use Contract Cleaners in the offices.
9. The use of Engineering Contractors to be as notified by Management.

18.1.81.

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... of ... has made ... and alternative ... Union Representatives ... for their ... that state to issue ... opportunity last ... which could then have ... their lack of ... another meeting on

... Monday, but the Company ... an endeavour to reach ... also had to say in ... cannot operate in

... understanding ... Continuation of ... the security ... the strike ...

... ..

(v) Letter dated January 21st.

21st January, 1981

Dear Employee,

### Industrial Dispute

The Company's policy over the past year or more of trying to keep our prices down so as to expand our Market Share and thus provide job security depends upon producing our beers economically, with efficient manpower levels.

Last July, a substantial wage increase was negotiated, and improved manning efficiency was proposed by voluntary redundancies and non-replacement of terminations. To achieve this a joint Company / Trade Union Manpower Committee was set up. The insistence of certain Trade Union Representatives on retaining inefficient working practices obstructed the work of the Committee, and, therefore, the required level of improvement was not achieved. The failure to obtain necessary economies came at a time when the Company had committed itself to holding prices for several months, while other Breweries were increasing theirs.

By January 5th, the Company could not avoid a price increase. In view of the general depression in industry and the Brewery trade in particular, as a means of holding costs as best we could (given that we have a very high level of wages due to Earnings Protection), the Company had to introduce a four day week. This is allowed for in your Contract of Employment.

The present strike action and resulting loss of barrelage has made matters worse for the future of the Company, and alternative economies have become necessary. We discussed with Trade Union Representatives last Friday the need to reduce manpower and asked for their assistance in discussing numbers. We declined at that stage to issue redundancy notices. Your Shop Stewards were given the opportunity last Saturday to propose and discuss reduced manning which could then have been achieved by voluntary methods. Because of their lack of assistance, compulsory notices were sent out after yet another meeting on Sunday morning.

There was no response from the Trade Union on Monday, but the Company met your Representatives all day on Tuesday in an endeavour to reach agreement on the reduced manning levels. We have also had to say in the 9 point Terms of Resumption that the Company cannot operate in the face of victimisation and blacking.

Your job protection for the future depends upon your understanding and acceptance of the need for manpower efficiency. Continuation of high level labour costs in the Company will jeopardise the security of employment for everyone. In addition, the longer the strike continues, loss of trade will increase the number of redundancies necessary.

continued....

Your Trade Union Representatives have caused some confusion as to whether or not they accept the redundancies, and whether or not to ask A.C.A.S. to become involved. We hope that this summary of the events of the last few days will indicate to you the efforts the Company is making to ensure the security of as many of your jobs as possible.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Personnel Director).

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(vi) Letter dated January 22nd.

22nd January, 1981

Letter to all Hourly Paid Employees on Strike

Dear Employee,

Warning of Dismissal

Details have already been given of the steps taken by the Company to contain the high labour costs, and unfortunately the efforts made to try and settle the dispute with your Trade Union Representatives have not been successful. In the meantime the interests of the trade are being undermined and the Company requires production to be resumed.

The Company, therefore, requires Boiler Stokers, Brewing, Fermenting and Phase One Process Workers to resume work on Saturday, and the remainder of employees on strike to resume work on Monday. Failing this, the Company will have no alternative but to issue notices of dismissal next week for breach of contract. If the Company thereafter decides to remain in business at Aston, offers of re-engagement will be sent to employees but the terms will exclude Earnings Protection and guaranteed hours in Traffic. To the extent that these offers of re-engagement are not accepted, new employees will be recruited from outside the Company.

The Company believes that a great deal of efforts has been made to try and find a financially viable solution to the dispute, but apparently your Trade Union Representatives do not fully appreciate the changed circumstances in which the Company now finds itself.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Chairman and Managing Director).

(vii) Letter dated January 27th.

27th January, 1981

Letter to all Hourly Paid Employees on Strike

Dear Employee,

Dismissal

The resumption of work called for in the Company's letter dated 22nd January, 1981, did not take place, and regrettably, therefore, it has become necessary to dismiss Hourly Paid employees on strike because of their breach of Contract in withdrawing their labour.

This letter now, therefore, terminates your Contract of Employment without notice and with immediate effect. This means that no payment of wages will be made for any period of notice. However, any monies due for work done previously, and any entitlements you have - for example, accrued holiday pay - will be forwarded to you shortly together with your P45. You will also be notified of your pension entitlement. This notice is issued by Ansell's Brewery Limited on behalf of Allied Breweries (U.K.) Limited.

As stated in the letter dated 22nd January, an offer of re-engagement will be sent to you. This will include those declared redundant by letter dated 17th January, 1981. The redundancy notices will be suspended while the response to the re-engagement offers is assessed, but they may be reactivated in the light of circumstances.

May I once again express the Company's regret for the action which we are now forced to take because your Trade Union Representatives fail to appreciate the Company's changed circumstances.

Yours sincerely,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Chairman and Managing Director).

(viii) Letter dated January 30th.

30th January, 1981.

Letter to all ex-Hourly Paid Employees who have been dismissed.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Offer of Re-engagement.

The Company believes based on years of experience that there is a sound market for its products in the Midlands provided they can be produced economically, and accordingly we wish to continue in business.

In view of this I am writing to offer you re-engagement by the Company in your previous job but on modified terms. If you accept you will be credited with the continuous service immediately before you went on strike. Your Contract of Employment will be in accordance with the Plant Agreement dated 1st July, 1975, subject to:

- (a) the substitution of the rates of pay attached;
- (b) Earnings Protection and Guaranteed Hours arrangements no longer apply;
- (c) overtime worked will be to meet the needs of the business as determined by Management and paid at the 1980 Rates of Pay;
- (d) the Company reserves the right to place you in a suitable alternative job if necessary as a result of an uneven response to this offer from ex employees.

The specified Engineering personnel will be required to work on a rota of one weekend in 4 as hitherto. Persons previously engaged on 168 hour duties will be required to resume work on the same pattern of hours. Traffic overtime will only be worked to meet the needs of the business as determined by Management.

If you wish to accept the revised Contract of Employment, would you please sign the attached acceptance slip and post or take it to "Personnel Department, Ansell's Brewery Limited, The Aston Brewery, Aston Cross, Birmingham, B6 5PP", to reach there by 5.00 p.m. Tuesday, 3rd February, 1981. You will be notified when to return for work.

Yours faithfully,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Personnel Director)

(ix) Letter dated February 9th.

9th February, 1981

Dear Sir / Madam,

By a letter dated 30th January, 1981, you were offered re-engagement in your previous job, because the Company wished to continue to operate the Aston Brewery. However, the level of employee response and the action by your Union in declaring an official strike, have now convinced the Parent Company, Allied Breweries Limited, that it would no longer be economic to re-open the Brewery, either with previous employees or new recruits. Allied Breweries have, therefore, decided on the permanent closure of Aston Brewery.

It is the Company's wish, however, to re-open a distribution service from Gravelly Park and Aldridge Depots which will mean a number of jobs being available to ex-employees. Suitably qualified drivers, mates and warehouse staff will be offered such jobs when an agreement is reached with the Union. The terms of re-employment in these jobs will be discussed and agreed with your District Officer.

The dismissal of an employee for breach of contract and his / her refusal of re-engagement means that the Company has no contractual obligations towards him / her. Nevertheless, recognising the service given by many employees in the past, the Company would be prepared to offer an ex-gratia payment to those for whom further employment is not available as set out above, provided agreement is reached on a speedy end to the present dispute. The terms of this offer can also be discussed with the District Officer, but our ability to pay any ex-gratia payment obviously depends on a speedy resumption of deliveries from the Depots.

If you would like to have any further clarification on the situation you should write to the Personnel Department. The Company expects to make arrangements to deal with enquiries about pension entitlements and related problems which should also be put in writing.

Yours faithfully,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Chairman and Managing Director).



(x) Letter dated March 3rd.

3rd March, 1981

Dear Sir / Madam,

Further to my letter of 9th February informing you that the Company had decided on the permanent closure of the Aston Brewery, it would seem that doubts are still being expressed as to whether the Company means what it says. I wish to make it clear that the Company will not re-open the Brewery, and this is not a subject for negotiation.

The Company has said, however, that it will negotiate conditions of employment for delivery and warehouse men on the re-opening of Gravelly Park and Aldridge Depots as well as for certain engineering, catering and ancillary staff. It will offer jobs to approximately 400 of its previous employees on terms which will not be less favourable than those offered at other Allied Breweries (U.K.) Limited locations.

If the above arrangements can be satisfactorily negotiated, the Company will, from its own resources, make an ex-gratia payment to those whom it does not re-employ. This payment would be based on length of service and would incorporate a sum free of tax of £1,000 plus a further £100 for each continuous year of employment with the Company in excess of 2 years. Any other claim arising from the dispute would be offset against this which would, therefore, be paid in full and final settlement.

We have asked the Electoral Reform Society to carry out an independent secret ballot of all those concerned to ascertain their views. We would, therefore, ask you to complete the enclosed ballot paper to indicate whether you want negotiations to take place concerning the re-opening of depots and the ex-gratia payment described above.

BALLOT PAPERS SHOULD BE POSTED IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE BY FRIDAY, 6TH MARCH, 1981, and all envelopes bearing a postmark of not later than the 6th March 1981 will be accepted.

If the present proposals are not taken up it is unlikely that any future proposal will include as many jobs or such beneficial financial terms because of the detrimental effect of the continuing dispute on Ansell's ability to pay.

Yours faithfully,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Chairman and Managing Director).

P.S. The Electoral Reform Society is an independent body which conducts ballots for many organisations including trades unions, e.g. the National Union of Mineworkers. This secret ballot gives you the right of every British Citizen to have your own

continued....

personal say without fear or favour to say "YES" or "NO". The way you vote as an individual will be known to you alone and only the result of the total vote will be revealed by the Society to the Trade Union and the Company equally.

BALLOT PAPER

Having read and understood the offer from Ansell's Brewery Limited contained on a letter from the Chairman and Managing Director, dated 3rd March 1981, do you agree that negotiations should be carried out on your behalf as set out in that letter?

YES

NO

(Please mark your choice with a tick in the appropriate box).

(xi) Letter dated April 22nd.

22nd April, 1981

Letter to all Ansell's ex-Hourly Paid Employees

Dear Sir / Madam,

The loss of Ansell's Brewery to Birmingham is a tragedy for all the people who worked there and without doubt the saddest event ever in the history of Allied Breweries. What was once a thriving and prosperous brewery has finally closed - never to re-open again.

No doubt the seriousness of the situation was not realised by those who led the strike which started 14 weeks ago and was the final act in closing the brewery, but it is vital that everyone realises the true situation we face today.

Part of Ansell's trade is disappearing and will not be recoverable.

11 weeks ago we could have assured good jobs for nearly 1,000 industrial employees in the brewery and depots.

6 weeks ago we could offer 410 such jobs in the two main depots.

Today we can offer just over 300.

If Aldridge and Gravelly Park have not re-opened next month there will be no jobs on offer - they will all have been lost.

If and when this unfortunate situation is reached then the Company will naturally withdraw all offers of ex-gratia payment to former employees as it has a clear duty not to make payments to people who have caused this permanent loss of employment.

If you wish to apply for one of the jobs still on offer you should write to the Company using the enclosed envelope (or a plain one if you prefer) so that it will reach the Company not later than close of business on Thursday, 30th of April, 1981. Print your name and previous clock number clearly.

It is vital for you to realise that if not enough people show that they want the jobs on offer by 30th April, 1981, the Company will withdraw completely all offers of jobs and ex-gratia payments. The final decision is yours - it now rests entirely with you as to whether or not it will be possible for us to offer each of you either a decent well paid job or a substantial capital sum, which will be negotiated by the permanent officials of your Union.

As Chairman and Managing Director of your Company, I make this final appeal to you - I can do no more.

**THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO MAKE A CHOICE.**

Yours faithfully,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED

(Chairman and Managing Director).

(xii) Letter dated May 20th.

an officer of the I.A.G.W.U.

20th May, 1981

Dear Sir / Madam,

Following my letter dated 22nd April, you replied saying that you wished to be considered for one of the available jobs. The terms below have been negotiated with the Union and can be briefly summarised as follows:-

#### Main Terms of Service for Those Offered Re-employment

The expected earnings for work Monday to Friday will be £163.20 (Drivers), £155.00 (Backmen) and £146.00 approximately (Warehousemen). Maintenance in the same range. Saturday earnings additional when required. Company service prior to 30th January, 1981, carried forward for pension purposes. Full details of Conditions of Service will be set out in the letter offering employment.

#### Ex-Gratia Payment

For those not offered re-employment the scale of payment subject to a minimum of the appropriate Government Redundancy Payment will be:-

- a) £1,000 for up to two years' service prior to 30th January, 1981.
- b) An additional amount for continuous service over two years based on the following scale.

Service up to age 49	£100 per completed year of service
Service between age 50 and 54 inclusive	£125 " " " " "
Service between age 55 and 59 inclusive	£150 " " " " "
Service between age 60 and 64 inclusive	£175 " " " " "

The final position on wages and ex-gratia payment takes account of recent negotiations with the Union. Where it is not possible to offer re-employment due to the limited number of jobs being available the emphasis in selection will be on length of service but naturally relevant work experience etc., will also be taken into account.

Since you have replied earlier that you wish to be considered for one of the jobs, I would be grateful if you would now confirm that you want re-employment so that offers can be prepared and sent out. Please let us have your reply in the envelope provided by return of post to reach us by not later than Saturday morning, 23rd May, 1981.

Yours faithfully,  
for ANSELLS BREWERY LIMITED.

(Chairman and Managing Director).

Appendix VII. Correspondence from full-time officers of the T. & G.W.U. during the Ansell's dispute (1981).

- (i) Letter to Ansell's Branch Chairman from T. & G.W.U.'s Divisional Secretary (West Midlands), April 24th, 1981.

24th April, 1981

Dear Brother Bradley,

I refer to our conversation today regarding the picketing by your members at Ind Coope, Burton-on-Trent, and thank you for the copy of the statement issued by the Burton-on-Trent Management concerning this event.

I am further advised by Brother (-), our Burton-on-Trent District Secretary, that a subsequent statement has been issued by the Company advising their Contractors to contact me for permission to cross any picket line.

I can advise you that at no time during the course of this dispute have I advised any members to cross any picket line, and at no time have I given any advise to any Contractor.

I have not agreed with Allied Breweries that your members are not allowed to picket the Burton Brewery.

I am well aware that supplies of beer are being delivered from Burton-on-Trent to the Ansell's Depots at Haverfordwest and Marshfield, and that part of the Ansell's Estate serviced by Burton-on-Trent transport is receiving normal deliveries.

Yours sincerely,

(Divisional Secretary).

- (ii) Letter to Branch Secretary, Burton-on-Trent from T. & G.W.U.'s Regional Secretary (West Midlands), April 27th, 1981.

27th April, 1981

Dear Brother (-),

In reference to your enquiry concerning the dispute involving our members at Ansell's Brewery Limited, I write to confirm that the dispute is being officially supported by the Union. The members are, therefore, being paid dispute benefit in accordance with the rules.

Yours fraternally,

(Regional Secretary).

(iii) Joint letter to Ansell's Branch Membership from  
T. & G.W.U.'s Regional and National Legal Secretaries,  
May 7th, 1981.

7th May, 1981.

TO: ANSELLS MEMBERSHIP

Dear Colleagues,

I enclose a letter from the Secretary of our Legal Department which deals with certain aspects of the current dispute with the Company.

I have also to advise you that the Managing Director of the Company has written to the Union indicating that, unless agreement to re-open the Aldridge and Gravelly Park Depots is reached by the 20th May, then the Company would withdraw all offers of re-employment and also the offer of an ex gratia payment to those whose jobs are lost.

In view of this latest development, the Union is under an obligation to ask you whether you wish us to negotiate for the re-opening of the Depots in the knowledge that the alternative can result in a total loss of jobs, together with the ex gratia payment.

Please indicate your wishes on the tear-off slip below and post this immediately in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Yours fraternally,

(Regional Secretary).

Please mark with an "X" either box "A" or "B" as appropriate and return this slip in the stamped addressed envelope.

I fully understand that the Brewery will not re-open, but I wish to continue to be in dispute with the Company and accept that as a result the compensation which has been offered will be withdrawn.

"A"

I have reconsidered my position and accept that negotiations should commence for the re-opening of the Aldridge and Gravelly Park Distribution Depots, coupled with the acceptance of the offer of compensatory payments to those who are not re-employed.

"B"

continued....

5th May, 1981.

TO: ANSELLS MEMBERSHIP

Dear Colleagues,

I write to set out certain observations on the current position which prevails in regard to the Ansell's Brewery dispute.

You will be well aware of the fact that the dispute is now in its 17th week and that the latest round of industrial negotiations has confirmed the fact that there is no intention of re-opening the Brewery.

I have before me the letter dated 22nd April and, whilst I will not comment upon this, it merely confirms the Company's determination; therefore, I think it is right that you should be aware of your position. Some of you no doubt, having had substantial service with the Company, would have pensions frozen and it may be that steps might have been taken to put part of the pension payable in jeopardy. However, more important is the fact that you are all aware that claims for unfair dismissal have been made and, whilst I do not wish to comment in any way on this particular aspect, my feeling is that the prospects of success are certainly not as good as they ought to be and any decision that you make should take this into account.

The Company are prepared to pay a capital sum of £1,000, plus £100 for each year of service. It must be understood that these offers cannot be regarded as open-ended. There is a limit which the Company have laid down, by which time all offers will be withdrawn. Whilst it is accepted that you might consider your industrial action should continue, we write to draw your attention to the fact that it is the Union's duty to advise you that you must fully understand that in continuing with the industrial action, the offers of compensation for loss of employment will be lost for all time.

As I have said there is no possibility of the Brewery re-opening and that any decision that you make will have to be made with all of these factors in mind; also Unemployment Benefit cannot be paid whilst a dispute is still in existence.

The Union will require you to signify on the enclosed statement that you fully understand the advice it has given to you in the event of your wishing to continue.

Yours fraternally,

(Secretary, Legal Department).

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