

**SCOTLAND 1979 — A CATALOGUE OF DISASTERS**

West-Central Scotland — the industrial belt around the city of Glasgow — probably lost more manufacturing industry during 1979 than any other part of Britain. Given the overall pace of deindustrialisation in Britain, the current situation in West-Central Scotland is without comparison in post-war history. The table below shows the major closures or redundancies announced or implemented during the last year or so.

The table includes only some of the larger companies involved. Estimates of the total loss of jobs in West-Central Scotland over the last 12 months are as high as 30,000, taking into account not only the list shown but the smaller, less dramatic cutbacks in large firms which have received little publicity, and the hundreds of closures amongst small firms in fields such as engineering, sub-contracting and, especially, textiles.

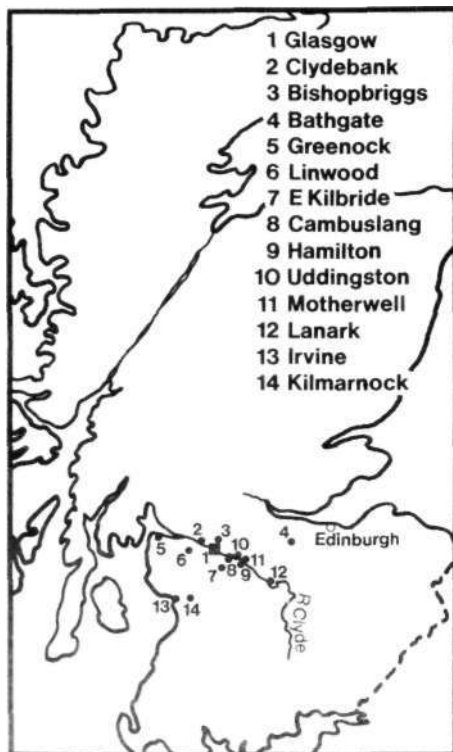
Prospects for the future are equally grim. It is difficult to be completely confident about the remaining several thousand jobs at Talbot, Linwood. Caterpillar Tractors appears to be considering a rundown of their major Uddingston plant, and job security at Rolls-Royce's East Kilbride works seems shaky in the light of that company's attempts to turn itself into a multinational. Above all, the current Government's handling of the public sector in manufacturing industry raises fears for the operations in West-Central Scotland of British Leyland (Bathgate and Glasgow), the British Steel Corporation (North Lanark-

shire) and British Shipbuilders (Glasgow and Greenock).

In most of the cases listed in the table below, local trade union organisations have either had their recommendations to fight redundancies rejected by the workforce, or they have recommended acceptance of redundancy terms. In at least two cases (Singers and Massey Ferguson) the workforce have, at the instigation of their stewards, acquiesced in closures on the basis of co-operation with management to attempt to find alternative uses for the plant. The willingness of workers to fight appears lower than it has been for decades.

The experiences of Clydeside in the past period are probably more acute than in most other areas, in that job loss has been higher, but they are fairly typical in that (a) the rate of closures has been accelerating and (b) there has been little *effective* resistance from the labour movement.

The labour movement, and in particular the Communist Party, has three major responsibilities in the current situation. The first is to understand clearly the processes which lie behind the collapse of manufacturing industry, in areas such as West-Central Scotland. The second is to have a clear programme for immediate action to fight closures which is related to a longer term economic strategy. The third is to have the political and organisational ability to translate that programme into effective mass action. Only then can we reverse the decline in morale which has developed, as time after time the trade union movement has appeared



Massey Ferguson	Kilmarnock	Agricultural Machinery	1100 jobs
Monsanto	Irvine	Artificial Fibres	1000 jobs
SKF	Irvine	Ball Bearings	600 jobs
Talbot	Linwood	Motor vehicles	1200 jobs
BSC	Glengarnock	Steel making	600 jobs
Prestcold	Hillington (Glasgow)	Compressors	700 jobs
Singers	Clydebank	Sewing Machines	3500 jobs
JBE	Clydebank	Gas Turbines	600 jobs
Goodyear	Drumchapel (Glasgow)	Tyres	700 jobs
Rest Assured	Queenslie (Glasgow)	Bedding	150 jobs
Templetons	Glasgow & Hamilton	Carpets	200 jobs
British Shipbuilders	Glasgow & Lower Clyde	Ships	2000 jobs
BSC	Lanarkshire Works, Motherwell	Steel making	600 jobs
BSC	Hallside Works, Cambuslang	Steel making & Rolling	700 jobs
BSR	East Kilbride	Domestic-Electrical	1000 jobs
Collins	Bishopbriggs, Glasgow	Printing & Publishing	200 jobs
			14850 jobs

helpless before an inexorable tide of closures. We need to start winning battles, and soon, if areas like West-Central Scotland are not to be devastated to an even greater extent than took place in the 30s.

The recent spate of closures in West-Central Scotland highlights one aspect of the decline of manufacturing industry located in Britain which must be carefully noted by the labour movement. Some of the names on the above list reflect the continuing decline of British-owned manufacturing industry — the consequence of decades of under-investment related directly to British capitalism's huge scale of overseas investment. There is unfortunately little that is new in this. But others (Massey Ferguson, Monsanto, SKF, Talbot, Goodyear) represent redundancies in the wave of 'new' industries which were brought into areas such as West-Central Scotland over the last thirty years or so, partly on the basis of the package of government incentives known as 'regional policy'. The two decades following the Second World War saw a high influx of such firms into areas like the West of Scotland. Many of them were American-owned (so much so that Scotland reputedly has now the second-highest level of American investment as a proportion of total investment of any country in the world, after Canada).

North American owned firms such as Massey Ferguson, Monsanto, Goodyear and Caterpillar came to Britain in the post-war period because Britain represented one of the most politically stable bases from which to penetrate the European market. Within Britain, they came to 'development areas', but especially Scotland, because of regional incentives amongst other reasons. The precise reasons for the recent spate of closures vary in each case, but several underlying currents can be identified. The first is the relative decline of American capital in world markets, in the face of EEC and Japanese competition. The Goodyear and Monsanto closures can be directly related to this. The second is the impact of Britain's EEC membership, and the third is the non-interventionist industrial policy of the current Government. It is significant that two major Scottish manufacturing operations have changed or are changing from US to EEC ownership in the past two years (PSA's acquisition of Chrysler, and UIE's takeover of the Marathon oil rig yard in Clydebank, which is in process at the time of writing). Massey Ferguson are shutting their Kilmarnock plant on the basis of centralising combine harvester production in their French factory. The company hung fire on their final closure decision until after the

General Election, as it was obvious that a Tory government would make it easier for the British plant to be closed. The impact of these processes has been that many of the 'mobile' multinational owned manufacturing operations in Scotland have shut up shop in the past period, and others are likely to follow suit.

The past year's catalogue of disasters poses us with two urgent problems. The first is: in the short term, given a general lack of new investment in British manufacturing industry, how should the labour movement respond to incoming foreign investment? The second, and much more critical, is: how and where are we going to get an effective fightback? In the longer term, it is clear that the labour movement, especially in areas such as Scotland, will have to reappraise its whole approach to regional policy — an issue which will increase in importance as 1930s type regional disparities reopen across Britain. On all these issues the resources of the Communist Party, both theoretical and organisational, must be mobilised on a scale appropriate to the gravity of the situation.

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