

Vestas and Government on the back foot

A month ago, Vestas bosses looked all-powerful. Now their repeated hoax threats, and their refusal even to talk to the press, show weakness.

The occupiers' demand is for Vestas to hand over the factory to the Government, and the Government to save jobs by continuing production under a new management, accountable to the workforce. Workers who still want to leave should get much better redundancy pay.

The Vestas bosses are not beaten yet. But even if eventually they get a court order and the occupiers decide to leave, the Vestas bosses can be beaten.

The Government was already shaky a month ago. It had already been forced to abandon its taboos against nationalisation and against higher taxes on the rich. Since then it has been forced to retreat on Royal Mail privatisation and on ID cards, and to renationalise East Coast mainline railways. The growing public storm about the Vestas closure puts pressure on the Government.

On their side, the bosses, the ruling class, always have wealth, force of habit, and the force of the State (the police!) That power is more fragile than it looks. Vestas management have been becoming more and more desperate. You can tell that they – and the Government – feel less confident by the day, despite all their attempts at intimidation.

On our side, what strength do workers have? Numbers; organisation; solidarity; and awareness.

Factories and machines can't run themselves. The Vestas bosses have hundreds of millions in wealth – but what use is that to them if they are scared to let their own employees into the workplace? If they feel they have to shut down production even though they have three quarters of a million pounds' worth of blades still to be finished? If they feel so scared that they have a fence built to keep us out, which also fences them in?

Since Monday, the economic weight, organisation, and confidence of Vestas workers has been visibly growing. Stewards and a Families Committee have been elected. Workers and supporters are determined that we are here to stay.

To win:

- _ Keep on building up the level of organisation at the factory gates;
- _ Take the message out to the labour movement and the community;
- _ Make sure Vestas workers stay in control of their own dispute;
- _ Whatever happens inside, maintain the picket lines on the gates.



Film showing: With Babies and Banners

Plus discussion on how factory occupations can win

Organised by Workers' Liberty

Sunday 26 July, 7pm, Victoria Hall, Methodist Church, Quay St, Newport

The film tells the story of the General Motors car workers' occupation in Flint, Michigan, USA, in 1936, which won union recognition in the US car industry, and especially of the Women's Auxiliary in that dispute.

The story so far

3 July: after some weeks of leafleting, Workers' Climate Action and Cowes Trades Council call a public meeting to discuss campaigning against the closure of the Vestas factories.

Two weeks starting 6 July: a minority of workers begin to discuss action. As the conversations spread, the idea grows that there are alternatives. Meanwhile public campaigning against the closure continues on the streets of the Isle of Wight.

Monday 20 July: Vestas management hear about the conversations and try to forestall action by threatening workers.

7.30pm: workers decide that they should move before the management try further pre-emptive action, and occupy the St Cross factory.

Tuesday 21 July to Thursday 23 July: Vestas bosses tells all other workers, at Venture Quays as well as St Cross, to stay home (on full pay) instead of working.

Management make repeated empty threats against the occupiers. They also refuse to let in food. (Eventually, on the Wednesday evening, they agree to supply food to the occupiers).

Organisation and numbers grow outside the factory. Support comes in from RMT, FBU, Unison, CWU, GMB, PCS, and other unions; from local Trade Union Councils; from the Campaign against Climate Change and the Climate Camp; from socialist groups; and from Labour and Lib-Dem parliamentary candidates.

Wednesday 22 July: a Families and Community Campaign is set up to back the Vestas strikers.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is a socialist political party active in Workers' Climate Action, in many trade unions, among students, and in other fields. We want a workers' government, based on and accountable to the organised working class, in place of Tory and New Labour bosses' governments. We want to see society reorganised on the basis of common ownership and democratic control, in opposition both to capitalism (the rule of profit) and the Stalinist model of the old USSR and China and Cuba today.