



EMAR - EFLR
Emek Arařtırmaları Vakfı
Easdale Foundation for Labour Research

EMAR SEMINAR

“They called for workers to come, but humans arrived”

by

Mark Bergfeld

(Queen Mary, University of London)

In the 1970s, a fighting generation of migrants arrived in West Germany. Young women and men had been brought here as “Gastarbeiter” from Southern Europe and Turkey. They were expected to ‘fit’, to restrain themselves, behave as good guests and most importantly work hard. As Turkish singer-songwriter Cem Karaca sang in one of his songs: “They called for workers to come, but humans arrived”. These very people had their own conceptions of dignity, respect and fairness, some of which were diametrically opposed to the needs of German capital(ism). Dreadful and isolated living conditions as well as unequal pay led them to organise among themselves, simply because the official unions for most part ignored the “guest workers”. In the era of the womens’, youth and student revolt of the 1968, and rising workers’ strikes and anti-establishment movements against authoritarian rule and capitalism in their home countries in the early 1970s, the political awareness intensified amongst the guest workers in the Rheinland in the summer of 1973. The women at the autoparts factory Pierburg took unofficial strike action in Neuss demanding 1DM more and the abolition of a gendered pay gap known as the Leichtlohngruppe 1. Turkish workers at Ford in Köln also took unofficial strike action in response to the situation where some workers returned from summer holidays too late and were just fired. This strike, denounced by the BILD-newspaper as “Türkenterror”, was directed equally against the bosses and official unions which did not take guest workers’ demands seriously.

ALL WELCOME!

SEMINAR SERIES
No 1

Friday, 26 February 2016
6:30pm - 8:30pm

VENUE:

Meeting Room,
Finsbury Park Trust FinSpace
225-229 Seven Sisters Rd,
Finsbury Park, London,
N4 2DA