WHO WE ARE

NETWORK is published by the Public Service Workers' Network, a part of the Solidarity Federation (SOLFED). We are a group of militant workers who seek to promote the ideas of workers' self-management and of revolutionary change in society. NETWORK is both a vehicle for these ideas, and a forum for workers to share, discuss and analyse our experiences, and to develop solutions to the problems we face, both day-to-day and long-term.

We welcome your letters, comments, articles, photos and graphics, although we cannot guarantee to publish them.

We are also seeking to network as widely as possible with like-minded workers. We see no point in wasting our time and energy trying to reform the existing remote, bureaucratic and fundamentally reformist unions, or in trying to elect more left-wing leaders. We want to see workers' organisation which is not divided by union affiliations, bureaucracy or political party, and which embraces all public service workers, whether they are employed by local government, health institutions, voluntary organisations or private contractors, on the basis of practical solidarity. We also seek to federate on a local basis to unite workers across industries to deal with issues which affect the working class as a whole, and do not restrict our activities to "bread-and-butter" workplace issues.

THE AIMS OF THE SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisation based on the same principles - revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and outside - which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Any organisation in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Industrial Networks and Locals which are the nucleus of future revolutionary unions and centres for workplace struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action - action by workers themselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all working people who agree with our aims and principles, working people who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unions we share. (Full Aims and Principles available on receipt of SAE.)

PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS' NETWORK

No.6 SPRING 1995 FREE

HARDER LABOUR

For many years now, Lewisham council in south east London has been cutting its workforce, and the pay and conditions of those who are left. At the same time the Labour-run authority has boasted about DIREC Team - the Direct Labour Organisation - and how it has managed to beat off competition from the private sector.

AGGRESSIVE

DIREC Team has concentrated on propaganda, pioneering service guarantees like the £1 back if your bin isn't emptied. Its management style has been aggressive - all of the major contracts have been retained in-house by treating workers worse than any of its competitors. It won the "Investment in People" award, but has sacked workers on the spot. As the workers in DIREC Team know, this success has been achieved at their expense, and that of the service.

The latest cuts - in pay, holidays and sick pay are the final straw. They involve breaking nationally-agreed terms and conditions for some workers. Everyone loses 5 days' Annual Leave, leaving manual and craft workers with 13 days, and officers with 20. Sick pay has been reduced to the statutory minimum - nowadays this means no pay for the first 5 days.

Workers also face straightforward pay cuts, depending on their section. The council bleats that if they didn't do it, outside companies would win the contracts, but on some contracts DIREC Team were 40% below the next lowest bid - a lot of money on a £10m contract.

This is deliberate undercutting - DIREC Team doesn't make mistakes on that scale. Why? - so soon after Lewisham voted against setting it up as a private company. DIREC Team management clearly want to go private and emulate the electricity, gas and water bosses' salaries and perks. There are rumours that £28m profits have been made in the last few years, and are intended to be used to set up a company to bid for contracts in other areas, notably Haringey in north London.

ORGANISE

Lewisham council has got to be hit where it hurts - in their profits. The unions can't be relied on to organise this, they're too close to the Labour Party leadership to suggest anything more than token protests. There are rumour that £28m profits have been made in the last few years, and that the party leadership will not be long before a similar attack is made on white collar staff, in the name of efficiency and the working class, of course.

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I would like to keep in touch with the Public Service Workers' Network

Name

Address

I can distribute copies of Network

I would like more information on the Solidarity Federation

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EDITORIAL

Our sharper readers might notice that the Labour Party gets a worse pasting than Chris Eubank in this issue. This is because we hate the Tories so much that we can't bear to mention their unspeakable acts.

Seriously, though, there are two reasons for this. The first is that no-one wrote anything about a Tory council, or central government department. We would welcome something in this area, but we can't do much about it, unless it's clear what all the Labour Parties are going to be like in the 1990s.

The second reason is that we believe we can only organise by tackling the issues we immediately face, and the people attacking us tend to be in the Labour Party. Blaming the government is their alibi, we don't accept that. Labour represents the interests of the middle classes who run it, and whose votes they want. Since the 1985-86 rate-capping cave-in, they haven't felt the need to go along with the unions and make concessions to working people.

Union leaders belong to the same social class, and are desperate to stop working class resistance which might frighten the middle classes into staying with the Tories. We're far the working class, and the working class alone.
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Housingworkers,particularlyblack
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however,thatthecouncilleader-
spacecareenoughaboutracismto
livedhisusefulness.

Bernie ...the bolt
So what has really been going on
in Hackney's housing directorate?
Well, for a start Crofton made his
name through an "investigation" into
HACKNEY CUTS.............
Hackneycouncil in east London is
using the threat of privatisation as
an excuse for its latest round of
cuts. A planned increase in the
Refuse and Cleansing working
week from 35 to 40 hours is being
resisted by an overtime ban started
on 17th March. Estate cleaning
and Parks workers are also under
immediate threat of the same, and
the implications for all council work-
ers are clear.
24 hour strike is planned for 30th
March, to coincide with UNISON's
A national day of protest at NHS and
other public service cuts. The rest of
the council's agenda includes:
- voluntary privatisation of Meals
on Wheels, replacing the council
service with frozen meals;
- change of hours of Housing
Wardens from 9-5 Mon-Fri to 3
shifts, including 12-8am, and be-
ing required to visit estates alone
at night;
- sacking and rehiring bus escort
and guides for children with spe-
cial needs to impose cuts in hours (i.e. pay) and conditions;
across the borough cuts will total
£10.4m, all without negotiation.

POOR ORGANISATION
How effective a 24 hour strike will
be is at least debatable. With
workplace organisation poor or
non-existent among most white
collar workers, and only appeals
to "members" to support "the view
of the stewards...that we have to
protest" as a strategy, this is a
non-starter.

Instead of our "leaders" calling a
branch meeting to "consult the
members", it would be better if the
(stopper) manual workers who've
banned overtime got workplace
meetings organised across the
council, so we can spot what's going
on, and what's being done about it.
Workers don't want "lead-
ership", we want to know losing
pay is worth it. We need to put the
boots in, not just protest.

CROFTON'S RACIST
WITCH HUNT
Anyone who watches the BBC's
Newsroom South East pro-
gramme, or who reads the Guardian,
will know the name Bernard
Crofton. The media have portrayed
Hackney's recently sacked Direc-
tor of Housing as a heroic campa-
aigner against corruption, unjustly
accused of racial harassment by a
council official to cover up the extent
of allegedly fraudulent job applica-
tions by West africans.

Housing workers, particularly black
ones, trades unionists with decent
principles, and anti-racists all have
a different view to the media. So
have squatters, homeless groups and
tenants who have trouble pay-
cing the rent. This does not mean,
however, that the council leader-
ship care enough about racism to
do more than use it as an excuse
to get rid of a bully who has out-
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COUNCIL CONSPIRES WITH POLICE TO SACK UNION ACTIVIST

In \textit{NETWORK} 5 we covered the case of the "Hackney 7" arrested as part of a police attack on an anti-Criminal Justice Bill (CJA) demonstration at the Town Hall, and of the victimisation of one of them by his bosses as a result. Below we update the story of the victimisation of John McArthur, UNISON convenor at Hackney Independent Living Team (HILT).

The cases against most of the Hackney 7 collapsed in court, and in two cases the judge recommended that video evidence of assaults by members of the Metropolitan Police Territorial Support Group (riot squad - there are 8 in London) be passed on to the Director of Public Prosecutions. We are not holding our breath. No-one had been tried for any offence arising from the demonstration in July at the time of these events, however.

**EVICION POLICY**

Since the demonstration had been aimed at Hackney's aggressive eviction policy towards squatters, and tenants in rent arrears or whose name is not on the rent book, for which the new powers under the CJA are ideal, the council reacted swiftly and ruthlessly. First it took out a High Court injunction banning those arrested from all council-owned property (including union offices, domestic violence and racial harassment units). Then, in conjunction with the police, it leaned on their employers.

For HILT management, this was an opportunity too good to miss. Like many similar council-funded community care organisations, it has ruthlessly attacked its workforce and their unions over the last few years. Workers have faced cuts in pay, conditions and staffing levels, as well as high levels of stress and violence. Anyone speaking out against this has been harassed and intimidated. Having locked themselves in the Council Chamber during the demonstration, the council leadership contacted the police the next morning to obtain confidential information on those arrested. The police are happy to oblige Hackney council in such matters, relieving their role in political repression. Having found out John worked for HILT, they provided the management with this information, and asked them what they were going to do about it, in effect inviting them to sack him.

Although a number of lobbies and noisy demonstrations in his support were organised by the Community Care Workers' Group and Hackney Trades Union Support Unit, nothing short of serious financial damage would have saved John's job. Since his sacking was urged by HILT's paymasters, and they intend to monitor court proceedings where practical, and will urge individuals to follow up claims against the police.

**FIGHT CRIMINALISATION**

The Criminal Justice Act criminalises peaceful picketing, lobbying and demonstrations. No longer is it just the TUC/ACAS guideline of "6 pickets or you're nicked" that the police will use against workers in dispute. There is liable to be an increase in bullying and arrests on marches, etc., unless we are equipped to demand freedom of speech and movement. A number of groups have worked together to set up the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (LDMG), aiming to:

- co-ordinate and provide trained observers at demonstrations in the London area;
- provide legal support during these events;
- set up support for any person arrested or charged following the demonstration;

**CROFTON'S RACIST WITCHHUNT**

Continued from page 2

managers, and how the class privileges of the latter mitigate the racism they face. Let no-one kid themselves that this is not about racism. One of Crofton's cronies, Yvonne Carr, may be black, but she's a black caribbean who has complained that there were "too many africans" working for Hackney. It should also be noted that black managers owe their fat salaries and privileges to a racist system, and quickly absorb its values, leaning harder on black workers than white to avoid accusations of "reverse racism".

Corruption - mostly white corruption - is an issue in Hackney, one which we hope to tackle in a future \textit{NETWORK}. For now we need to stand together and fight racism, because if we don't we'll never be strong enough to tackle those who are really corrupt - those in power.
**UNIONS**

UNISON members may have got ballot papers for keeping the political fund earlier this year. Ex-NALGO members might wonder how they ended up affiliated to the Labour Party, and why they get no say about it. Of course, this is just an event, or even a positive thing, PSWN does not.

**ANTI-UNION LAWS**

The reason UNISON needs a political fund is that the Tory anti-union laws gag it on anything - such as budgets - which a public service union needs to publicise unless it has one. However, by bottling the question of Labour Party affiliation - NUPE and COHSE were both affiliated, and leaving it to individuals which section of the fund to contribute to, the union's leadership have tied it to the party.

No surprise, but it adds to the unease many feel about being roped into a remote Super-Union with a huge "silent majority" for the right wing (Labour in this contest) to use to justify their own political agenda. That involves cracking down on unofficial action, courtship of the Labour Party instead of campaigns of industrial action, and calling for a legal minimum wage instead of fighting to improve pay and conditions for those of us not yet poor enough to qualify for pelf from the middle classes.

Like it or not, affiliation to the Labour Party (and commitment to getting it elected and not rocked by scabs or driven into any independent political agenda. This would be a problem even if the majority of our bosses in Local Government weren't Labour.

You can affect how much money they get, and the symbolic support each individual political levy gives them, and we strongly urge all ex-NUPE and COHSE members to switch to the non-affiliated fund. However, this problem will not be solved by individuals, and it has deliberately been done this way by the UNISON leadership.

It's no real change from NALGO's once vaunted political independence, anyway. The union followed the same basic social democratic politics as Labour and its affiliates, it just didn't mention any names, which might sound better than urging people to vote Labour "against the Poll Tax" when they're collecting it with alacrity, but with no alternative to electoral politics it's just the same.

**WINTER OF DISCONTENT**

You might think that if Labour get elected the unions will get militant again, after all NUPE and COHSE were affiliated to the Labour Party during the Winter of Discontent. However, things have changed since 1979. Most notably it is now 10 years since the miners returned to work unbroken, but defeated. 1985 marks a watershed of similar proportions to the failed General Strike of 1926, discrediting industrial action in the minds of many workers. After all, if the miners couldn't do it, how can public service workers with little clout? This effect can not be ignored.

**DIRECT ACTION**

We don't mean a "red union" which separates revolutionaries from the workforce, we mean something different from what we have had, but which exists in the workplace (as well as outside it), dedicated to direct action (and to social revolution), and to restoring a meaning to union membership by organising. A real alternative to Tony Blair and the "don't strike, vote Labour" mentality of the unions.

As part of the Solidarity Federation (SF) and of the International Workers' Association (IWA) the Public Service Workers' Network is backing an initiative to revitalise May Day as a day of international solidarity between working people. To give it new life demonstrations will target the spearhead of international capitalism - the so-called World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

May Day - May 1st, not the Bank Holiday - TUC leaders hack and (lettle paper sellers please note) - has been supposed to be a day of mourning, protest and solidarity for the working class worldwide since the last century. In 1889 the International Socialist Congress in Paris, whose heirs are the Red Rose brigade we all know and love, declared May 1st to be international workers' day from 1890.

This was both in solidarity with the struggle of workers in the United States, and worldwide, for the eight hour day, and in commemoration of the Haymarket or Chicago Martyrs of 1886. These eight workers, of whom four were hanged by the State of Illinois and a fifth due to having committed suicide (or was murdered) in his cell, had been the main organisers in Chicago in the four day strike for the eight hour day which swept the USA from May 1st 1886, and was particularly fierce in that city.

The strike in Chicago, and also in Milwaukee, in the American industrial Midwest was particularly bitter, and changed the course of political conditions for the rest of the US politics.

The trick is not to get the debts paid off, but to use them to further our world's resources and its labour. The Structural Adjustment programmes imposed in South Africa are about privatisation and cuts. Schools, health programmes and the like are axed to pay debts to the likes of Lloyds, Barclay, NatWest. Instead of growing food for themselves, farmers are forced to grow cash crops to sell for export. You think famine and disease are acts of god? God is a fat bastard in New York, Zurich or the City of London. This also contributes to environmental collapse, as subsistence farming is forced to use rainforest land and intensive farming causes soil erosion.

Class should not be forgotten - not everyone in the Third World is poor. The political collaborators and clients of the IMF and World Bank, local ranchers, bankers and enforcers all grow rich from this process. We not just feeling sorry for other people either. Those of us with longish memories remember an IMF programme brought in by the last Labour government under Jim Callaghan and Dennis Healey after Harold Wilson ratted from the sinking ship in 1976. Their policies were called Monetarist and resulted in the pay "restraint" and public service cuts which led to the Winter of Discontent in 1978-79.

**MONETARISM**

Blaming workers and the unions for this helped the Tories get in in May 1979, enabling Labour to re-name Monetarism "Thatcherism" and absolve itself. Remember "Don't blame me, I voted Labour" stickers? Instead of going on tiny marches on or around May Day, we'll be part of an international campaign of getting overdrafts, interest, bank charges, etc., and harassed when they inevitably fall behind with the payments. Debt re-scheduling is a way of life in the so-called Third World.

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