

Ever voted for strike action and then found yourself totally stitched up by your union? Well, this is what happened at White Arrow Express, the parcel and catalogue delivery service, during the 1992 wage negotiations.

In September, more than a year later, the T&G granted White Arrow shop stewards the opportunity to question Victor McGeer, the union full-timer responsible for overturning the original strike ballot. Like any good bureaucrat, McGeer tried to worm his way out by passing the blame on to the negotiating committee (which consists of lay members of the union).

In fact what really happened was that the company threatened to sack anyone who took action, de-recognise the union and introduce personal contracts if there wasn't immediate acceptance of the offer on the table. Clearly, at this point McGeer panicked at the thought of the loss of membership this might lead to and, more to the point, the implications for his own job.

Such behaviour comes as no surprise to us. We have pointed out in the past how, when workers want to take action, they more often than not find themselves fighting their own union as well as the management. Furthermore, in the absence of organisation independent of official union structures the Victor McGeers of this world will flourish.

On a more optimistic note the meeting addressed the need for the White Arrow workforce to be better organised in order to face up to the company and called for an annual national meeting of shop stewards. While the danger of full-timers attempting to control such meetings must be guarded against, we can only encourage such initiatives which bring workers from all over the country together to discuss common problems and to try and reach common solutions.

Source: T&G branch newsletter

## TRADE UNIONISM IN CRISIS BUILDING AN ANARCHO SYNDICALIST ALTERNATIVE

NEWCASTLE - Saturday 18th December 18th, December, 1pm. Trade Union Centre Against Unemployment, 4 The Cloth Market, Newcastle.

BRISTOL - Saturday 29th January, 12noon. The Grovenor Hotel, opp. Bristol Temple Meads - BR.

### OPEN MEETINGS

to discuss workplace organisation and building a fighting alternative

**SPEAKERS:** Tony Crowther, Manchester Picadilly 4 (sacked RMT rep) from Transport Workers Network. Plus Education Workers Network and Public Service Workers Network.

**TRANSPORT WORKERS NETWORK,  
EDUCATION WORKERS NETWORK & PUBLIC SERVICE  
WORKERS NETWORK**

For further information - PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester

# TRANSPORT WORKER

By Transport Workers - For Transport Workers

No. 7 Winter 93/94

FREE

## We'll Be On Our Knees Until We Stand And Fight

### DEFEND THE P.T.R.& R!

In November 1993 the Tories finally pushed the Railway Privatisation Bill through Parliament. As the miners discovered a few months earlier, when it comes to defending working class jobs and conditions of employment, there is no such thing as a Tory rebel. The railway unions RMT and TSSA's, so-called "Better Rail Campaign" and ASLEF's sad "Save Our System" were shown to be without any meaningful strategy for opposing privatisation. The only way it could have been stopped was if the unions had been prepared to spread the fight to other public sector unions and win the industrial action early this summer, rather than surrendering after a token show of resistance and then collaborating in the remorseless progress of the parliamentary bill.

Whether or not any private buyers come forward now to take up the franchises and contracts, the foundations have been laid for the privatisation of our conditions of employment. In our view this is what the intention of privatisation has always been. Only the lunatic fringe of the Tory right-wing has ever believed that the private sector could or would want to run a railway system which does not make a profit. A more powerful faction of the Tory party, the Road Lobby, saw it as a chance to close down a competitor and snap up some lucrative civil engineering contracts in the short term, but only if they could be sure of not taking on the present conditions of service in the industry. The most important of these is the PTR&R.

The national agreement on Promotion, Transfer, Resettlement and Redundancy is the major achievement of post-war trade unionism in the railway industry. Having thrown away the 1956 Machinery of Negotiation, and the Disciplinary Procedures now being effectively by-passed by management, it is all that is left to show for 45 years of trade unionism under nationalisation. It is the only guarantee for

#### INSIDE:

- Bus strategy
- International news
- PTR & R - action time
- Strike news
- and more, more,more...

rail workers in an industry that has seen tens of thousands of jobs lost since the '60's, that there will be no compulsory redundancies. It ensures that a worker whose job is made redundant will be paid compensation for travelling to work at a new location. It ensures that any worker who is relocated will not have a cut in wages. There is no way that as long as Richard Branson has a hole in his arse, that a private contractor or franchisee will honour the PTR&R.

The position unions adopt now is crucial in defending this national agreement. The role of ASLEF during their one day strike this summer is an example of how to sell out PTR&R. They demanded assurances from the BR Board that they would honour this agreement. This was forthcoming, but it won't be the BRB that reneges on the PTR&R, but the private franchise holders in order to cut wage bills by issuing new contracts and conditions of employment. Sit back and wait for this to happen in 1994 and it will be to late!

Action to defend our rights has to happen before April 1994. After then any national industrial action will be deemed illegal, and given the "respect for Tory trade union

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## WE'LL BE ON OUR KNEES UNTIL WE STAND AND FIGHT.

On BR, the state of both RMT and ASLEF, is such that we feel only TWN is in position to address the work needing doing and bring together in common cause all transport workers conscious of our need to break out of the TUC and Labour Party straitjacket and building a network to spread information, offer support, develop the needed responses to privatisation and all it entails, while TU leadership sit rooted in the past, and paralysed by the present and future.

On the buses, our TU's are equally as restricted by their own narrow mindedness and inward looking approach. In the growing numbers of coach companies operating on traditional city and rural routes, workforces are left unorganised and low paid, consequently undermining the wage levels of all bus workers.

The TWN is prepared to do the necessary work, here and now in our workplaces, in branches, in cooperation with fellow bus workers, across companies, unionised or non-unionised (see the 'bus strategy' elsewhere in this issue), to change this situation.

Equally as important, yet neglected by TU's is the need for vibrant workers participation in their own organisation, and for self-education to address how we can best tackle all the problems we face, with the structures of work and society being steadily made more and more hostile to working people for the benefit of the rich and powerful.

The TWN is an organisation in which all members are able to play active and equal roles, in both decision making and action.

We are not going to be satisfied with half-baked reforms or empty slogans, we are working for real change. It's as much up to you as us to make that happen.

### JOIN TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK.

Write to TWN, c/o PO Box 73, Norwich. NR1 2EB for further information and membership details, or attend on of the open meetings in Newcastle or Bristol that we are jointly hosting in the near future (details in this bulletin).

### DON'T FORGET THE MANCHESTER REPS

The 4 Manchester Piccadilly RMT reps now have a date for industrial tribunal, starting the 14th Feb. Please send donations and messages of support to them c/o M.Harrison, 9 Shelford Avenue, Gorton, Manchester 18.

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laws" or rather fear of losing funds, shown by the railway union leaders it is unlikely that the PTR&R will be defended by balloting for strike action.

The key to defending PTR&R will be forcing the new managements that come with privatisation to honour it, and making it clear that if they plan to make profits by scrapping the conditions of service underwritten by PTR&R, then strike action will be called. The point must be made now that rail workers will prevent anyone being picked off and sacrificed on the altar of privatisation.

This almost certainly means confrontation with Government. There is little point in sitting down to negotiate away our working conditions. We should put our demands to the Department of Transport. Opposition to privatisation is not possible without taking political action. Although PTR&R is a contractual issue, privatisation makes it impossible to believe any guarantees from our present employers. This November the civil service union NUCAP took strike action against market testing (privatisation), their funds were not seized, neither were their leaders imprisoned. We can no longer be intimidated by the bogeyman of "illegal political strikes"

TRANSPORT WORKER calls for all union branches to petition their leaderships immediately to obtain guarantees from the Department of Transport, the Franchise Director and Railtrack that PTR&R will be guaranteed before any contracts or franchises are awarded. If no guarantees are forthcoming a national strike ballot must be called.

## ACTION ON THE RAILS - ROLL OF HONOUR

In recent months a number of disputes have occurred locally on the railways, proof if any is needed that even if the union leaders have lost the taste for taking effective industrial action, their members are still prepared to stand up to macho managers and know how to get results.

Importantly whilst some of these local actions have been the result of legally carried out ballots, many workers have decided that the only way to get anything done in these days of anti-union laws and spineless leaders, is by direct action, not pussy-footing around.

LONDON UNDERGROUND - Early October a magnificent victory by RMT members in response to the victimisation and sacking of two RMT reps. A ballot of Central Line members resulted in a one day strike with the

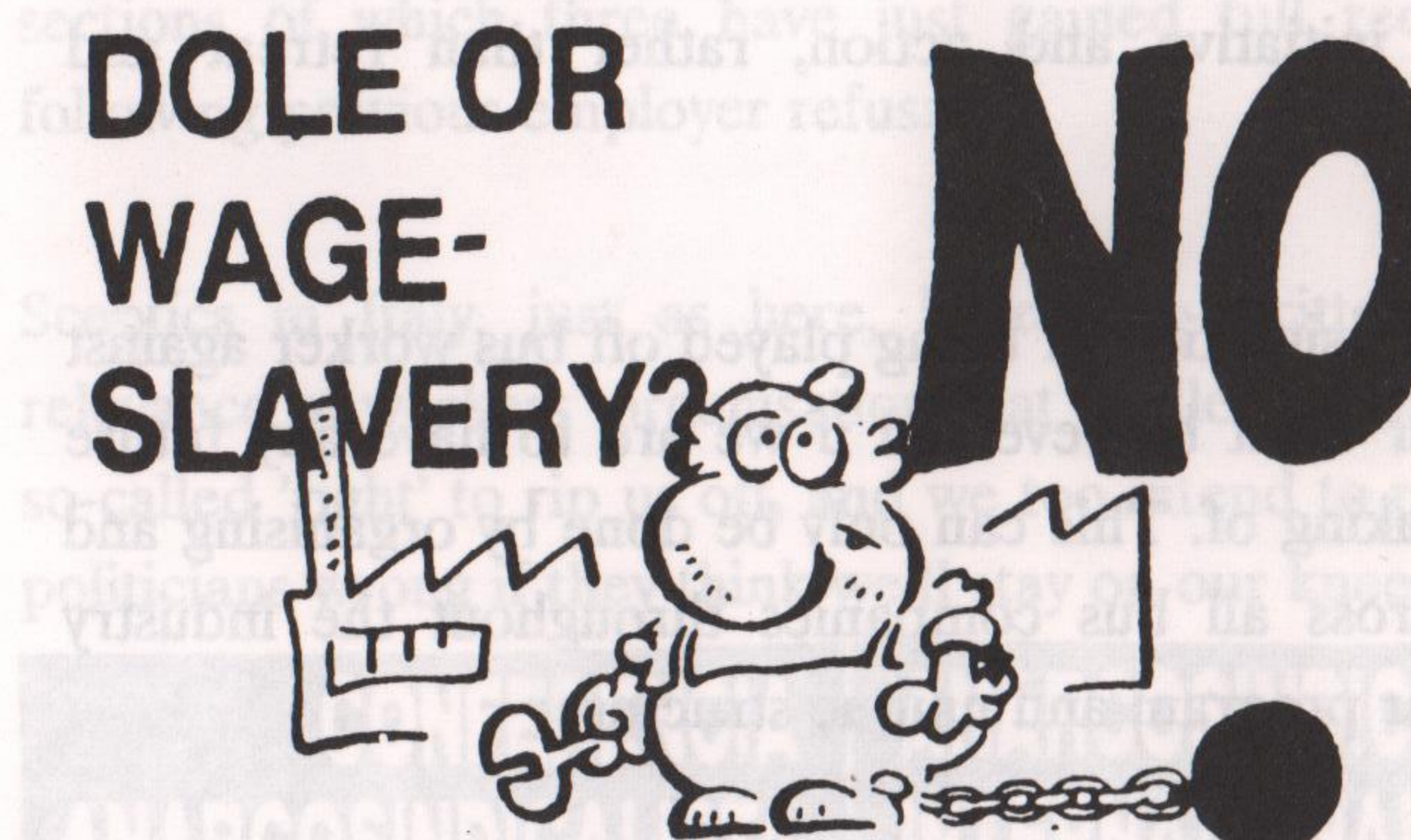
option of further action by all members on London Underground if management did not reinstate the men. Despite the out and out hostility shown by management to the RMT, management soon saw reason and agreed to go to arbitration with the proviso that the men would be reinstated. This victory was all the more important because it focused attention on management's hated and discredited "Disciplinary Boards", which are nothing more than a kangaroo court to sack union activists. Here is another reminder that our brothers at Manchester Piccadilly would be back at work today if the RMT leadership had shown the same kind of backing for them as it did for brothers Steizner and Sikorsky on London Underground. Just what benefit are powerful union leaders?

EXETER - The local RMT branch has won a massive majority (137 to 15 in favour), for one day strikes to defend a member who has been the victim of gross injustice, being demoted in grade to carriage cleaning for allegedly swearing at a passenger, despite witnesses giving evidence to the contrary. The first day of action was Friday 19th November, with all RMT members signing on at Exeter St Davids (platform staff, guards, signal panel, S & T, and P Way) being called to withdraw their labour. This is a significant dispute since management at Exeter and elsewhere on BR are well known for throwing disciplinary forms around like confetti. This is the best way to respond to management intimidation - hit them where it hurts. LATE NEWS - the day before the strike, management backed down, reinstating with full back pay - just goes to show what can be achieved through unity and determination.

Elsewhere the Permanent Way has seen a number of disputes which are getting results without waiting for months to go through balloting procedures. MANCHESTER - reports of management having trouble finding volunteers for weekend working as a result of a withdrawal of Sunday work. LEEDS - P-Way workers came out on unofficial action for 5 days, getting paid for 4 of them after going back to work with a satisfactory result. CARDIFF - Train crew managers had trouble running trains on a Rugby International day, as conductor guards declined to work their rest when management had refused to release people for compensatory, lieu day leave. We also hear that Cardiff workshop staff have had frank discussions with their management which resulted in a disruption of normal working patterns.

All this goes to show that railway workers are not about to roll over and play dead in the face of the Tories' plans to destroy our industry and undermine our working conditions. Industrial action is the best message to send to the Government and wannabe private contractors that this

industry is not a soft touch. It is also a timely reminder to the leaders of the railway unions, that a union lives and dies by its ability to organise workers on the job and off it. In the present climate a workers' organisation cannot survive for long if it is not prepared for strike action.



## TRANSPORT WORKER BULLETIN APPEAL

With each bulletin we produce costing £400 to print and distribute, any donation you can make is welcome. We don't have any secret or wealthy backers. 4,000 bulletins are distributed to bus, rail and haulage workers every issue - that's 28,000 over the past three years. Give your support to the only paper that gives transport workers their own voice and the bosses the respect they're due. Please make cheques payable to "Transport Worker Network", c/o PO Box 73, Norwich, NR1 2EB.

These donations came in during August, September and October. Many thanks, TRANSPORT WORKER bulletin depends on the continued support of members and readers.

JB, East London: £5 Piccadilly Four, Manchester: £10 AB, Lancs: £5 JH, Norwich: £10 PT, Norwich: £20 AG, Bristol: £50 Norwich Solidarity Centre: £33 TC, Manchester: £50 ROC, Manchester: £25 DAM/International Workers Association: £100 RB, Newcastle: £5 Liverpool DAM: £10 PC, Norwich: £15

TOTAL: £318

## A STRATEGY FOR THE BUS INDUSTRY

*Organising to unite bus workers across company divides, from small coach company workers to the large fleets.*

Set out here are proposed outlines of methods and direction to enable us to create a transport workers' organisation based on initiative and action, rather than retreat and compromise.

Our present situation of being played off bus worker against bus worker must be reversed if we are to have any future worth speaking of. This can only be done by organising and uniting across all bus companies throughout the industry with a clear program and unique structure:

\* A bus workers' section (engineers, cleaners, drivers, office staff, no management: one industry, one organisation), organising all bus workers across city/area, then region and nationwide. Working to improve and equalise all bus workers' pay and working conditions, pooling information to be available to all, from health and safety to breakdowns of company accounts and profits. To provide information to all bus workers enabling us to make informed decisions.

\* To prepare and put into action ways of preventing management playing us off worker against worker (cons, minibus etc...), company against company, with their threats of company X's workforce, the 3 million unemployed etc... about to take our work. Workers united in one union, starting in one locality, prepared to actively support one another will remove the force of any such threats and put the bosses in a position of weakness.

\* Promote amongst fellow bus workers a minimum wage (also of benefit to those on relatively higher earnings in that the threat of undercutting is removed). This is particularly important in the coaching sector. Equal and improved pay must be gained at the expense of management and directors' inflated salaries, and parasite shareholders' returns from the wealth we create. All these types contribute little, if anything, whilst taking the lions share.

\* The Transport Workers Network (TWN) only promotes action that is direct and effective. Not the narrow, misleading and ineffective gestures of brain-dead union leaders, such as token marches, bed-pushes, releasing balloons, two-minute vigils, lunch-break stoppages... all laughable if it wasn't that workers livelihoods are at stake. Equally as bad are strikes that allow the bosses to starve us back to work on lower pay or worsened conditions.

\* Occupations, good/free work (to the public), strikes, and other forms of on the job action are always worth consideration and are far more scab-proof. Not only because they can be more effective and put bosses on the defensive, but because they give us an opportunity to run our industries ourselves and giving us experience of a way of doing things that is of benefit to ourselves and our class. In this way we can learn that a different economic system is possible without political parties, leaders and officials governing our lives.

\* The TWN does not want union negotiators arranging deals and compromises, but workforces confident in their own strength and full involvement, able to act for themselves making genuine demands, not the continual wheeling and dealing away so often done to us. Mass meetings of all workers concerned, not unaccountable minorities, must be where discussions and final binding decisions are made.

\* The existence of a cross-company organisation of bus workers will act to reduce the tendency to identify with our companies, and strengthen our solidarity as fellow workers instead. In disputes the practical benefits are apparent - the bosses will no longer be able to subdue us with the threat of other workers jumping in to do our work. Only two years ago during a strike, one company's bosses requested that another ran busses on their routes to break the strike.

\* TWN cross-company organisation will also engage in political action on the basis of complete independence and hostility to all political parties. The goal of our political action is to establish direct control of each industry by its own workers, likewise the control of each community over its own affairs. We support the federation of the TWN with any and all workers organisations working to this end. The practical application of this goal is through cooperation, maximum participation. From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. We reject all political parties (right and left alike) - they serve only their own interests, reducing the majority to passive onlookers and wage-slavery.

\* The present membership of the TWN in TGWU and RMT unionised workplaces hold dual membership. Alongside promoting workers' direct control we continue in attempting to hold the unions accountable for their actions/inaction and put forward effective alternatives, push for the greatest level of control by workers over their own affairs, and attack the notion that change will come from waiting for others to bring it about for us.

The TRANSPORT WORKERS NETWORK, by organising across company and union divides, uniting all grades of

worker, aims to provide that which the TGWU, RMT etc... cannot, despite their lawyers, full-timers, and millions in funds: \* Resources open to all members and fellow workers. \* Decision-making on the basis of every members welcome participation. \* The workplace branch having independence in its own affairs, within the framework of the organisations aims and principles. No dictatorship from distant leaders, ignorant of workplace realities. \* Solidarity - total opposition to management attacks, and support for all workers in struggle. \* Any TWN posts and all tasks are fully accountable to membership, of limited term, and subject to recall.

This is intended to start debate on how we can go beyond the narrow and short-sighted way our unions operate.

Your contributions, be they to further these ideas, useful experiences, or criticism, are all welcome. In future issues of the bulletin we will continue to look at developing a strategy of real benefit to all bus workers. Let's hear what you have to say.

### ANARCHOSYNDICALISM IN EUROPE CONFERENCE

In October two delegates from the Transport Workers Network attended a conference organised in Barcelona to discuss issues facing European workers. Topics which were discussed included de-regulation of employment practices; unemployment; the actual situations in both the private and public sectors including privatisation; subcontracting including self-employment; im-migration and racism; as well as the actual opportunities for spreading anarchosyndicalism in the various European countries.

TWN proposed that all transport workers sections within the various European anarchosyndicalist organisations should co-ordinate together to spread news of disputes and other information (on working practices and new laws, for example) more efficiently. This idea is something which we will be following up in the future.

Interested in the TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK ? For information on membership, meetings, etc tick here  For further copies of this TRANSPORT WORKER bulletin and future issues, please fill in this form and return to PO Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB.

Name

Address

Industry / workplace

Quantity

\*Transport Worker is run on a shoestring, so donations are very welcome.\*


## ITALIAN ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST UNION ON THE UP-AND-UP!

Now the largest union at the S. Paulo hospital in Milan, the Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI), is enjoying considerable growth throughout the entire Milan region. Three of the hospitals in the area have USI union sections with membership over 100, in addition to seven other union sections of which three have just gained full recognition following previous employer refusal.

Sceptics in Italy, just as here, have long written off the relevance of workers' organisation that challenges the bosses so-called 'right' to rip us off, and we too intend to prove the politicians wrong if they think we'll stay on our knees!

CONFERENCIA ANARCOSINDICALISTA INTERNACIONAL

ANARCOSINDICALIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



**A.I.T.**  
**BARCELONA**  
9, 10 Y 11 OCTUBRE 1993

MI PAIS EL MUNDO, MI FAMILIA LA HUMANIDAD  
MY HOME COUNTRY THE WORLD, MY FAMILY THE HUMANITY

## TRADE UNIONISM IN CRISIS - CONFERENCE

Held Saturday 30th October, on the decline of trade unions and the need to build a political and industrial alternative to the shambles which is the present labour movement. Co-sponsored by the Transport Worker Network and industrial networks of Public Service (local government, health and voluntary sectors) and Education workers, the conference was attended by a large number of shop stewards and workers from a wide variety of unionised and non-unionised industries. It produced a high level of debate as well as many interesting and practical suggestions on how to go about organising a fightback.

### - Failure of trade unionism:

After a relaxed lunchtime registration session during which we were able to browse through several excellent bookstalls and a display of posters about the class struggle made available by Norwich Solidarity Centre, we heard from Tony Crowther, one of the Manchester Piccadilly guards sacked for trade union activities, on the reasons for the decline of the "labour movement". Tony explained how the two main currents in British trade unionism had both failed to defend working class living standards.

The first tradition of strong workplace organisation based on unofficial industrial action led by shop stewards failed because it lost sight of the need to a worker controlled alternative to the capitalist economy becoming inward-looking and limiting itself to wage militancy. Social democracy, the second tradition, of electing Labour MPs to parliament to work with national trade union leaders for social peace and managed industrial relations failed because it depended on the Keynesian economic plan to manage demand and thus stabilise capitalist economies. When the basic underlying weakness of the British economy became clear in the early 1970's, the TUC had no answers beyond pleading with employers to allow them to negotiate redundancies/wage cuts rather than having them imposed.

### - New forms of workers' organisation:

With this historical failure and the fundamental changes which have taken place within the economy during the last 20 years - the decline of many traditional industries and the existence of high unemployment, more casualised labour and the resulting attacks on workers' wages, conditions and ability to organise - Tony considered that new methods of organisation were necessary. Workers' organisation is needed to defend us against all the attacks we face, whether

in the workplace or as in the case of the poll tax, more indirect taxation such as VAT on fuel or environmental problems. Such workers' organisations will need to be based as much on locality or community as the workplace. They would also need to take responsibility for political actions, instead of relying on professional liars in parliament to "look after the workers' interests". The only type of workers' organisation which is capable of defending our class against a bankrupt capitalist system is one that would scrap it. Revolutionary unions or anarcho syndicalism is that alternative.

The next speaker enlarged on the question of how revolutionary unions operate. Martin, a Lambeth council worker, explained that such unions follow two basic principles; direct democracy - the members of the union should control all decision-making and be able to recall any delegate who breaks their mandate, and direct action - a workers' organisation lives or dies on its ability to promote class solidarity and a culture of resistance. Education is a crucial role for a revolutionary union to prepare organised workers for the day when they take control of society and run it for need not profit. This is what anarcho syndicalists mean by "building a new world in the shell of the old".

### - Workers' and community control:

Without doubt the third speaker was the star of the day, we had the pleasure of welcoming Pepe Gomez, a shipyard worker from Puerto Real in south-western Spain and a militant of the Spanish anarcho syndicalist union, the CNT. Pepe spoke firstly on the principles of the CNT and the 1988 strike in his shipyard which was illustrated with a slide show. The conference was extremely impressed by the determination and ingenuity of the strikers who organised entire shipyard communities in support of the strike through mass assemblies of workers and their families in the towns, villages and communities around the docks. The tactics they employed varied from sabotage of road, rail and telephone links, to armed occupation of the ships in the dry dock. When the smoke cleared from the barricades of burning tyres around the shipyard, the strikers were left with a remarkable victory which has assured increased work at the yard, a job rotation scheme and early retirement at 55 with pensions linked 100% to the actual wages of shipyard workers.

Since then other disputes and issues have been interlinked with the continuation of mass assemblies in the area - struggles around education, health, cultural issues, opposition to the building of a new golf course, local tax increases, the privatisation of a cemetery and numerous environmental issues... All showing that anarcho syndicalism is about more than just what goes on at work. Unlike the



reformist trade unions' and political parties' emphasis on separating the economic, social and political issues that affect us, in order that we remain powerless over our own lives, the CNT is promoting an active democracy that involves all in addressing their problems directly. Only 2 weeks ago, 6,000 people took part in one town assembly.

Rather than town councillors making decisions for people, the mass assemblies are taking decision-making back to local estates and communities. The mass workers' assemblies during the strike at the shipyard have also continued, in contrast to the ways of reformist unions in concentrating decision-making in the hands of a few. (A booklet on the CNT in Puerto Real, going into greater detail will appear early 1994).

## HEROIC TRANSPORT FAILURES

### 1). THE WORST BUS SERVICE

Can any bus service rival the fine Hanley to Bagnall route in Staffordshire? In 1976 it was reported that the buses no longer stopped for passengers. This came to light when one of them, Mr Bill Hancock, complained that buses on the outward journey regularly sailed past queues of up to thirty people.

Councillor Arthur Cholerton then made transport history by stating that if these buses stopped to pick up passengers they would disrupt the timetable.

### 2). THE WORST LOCOMOTIVE DESIGNER

Few engineers can equal the achievement of Francis Webb, a locomotive designer for the London and North Western

After a lively session of questions from the floor, the conference broke up into workshops to discuss how we can take these lessons and apply them in our own industries. The substantial agreement as to the problems we face in different industries; sub-contracting / CCT, individual contracts and the destruction of pay rates and conditions of employment, was echoed by the solutions which industrial networks can provide; good and accurate information to workers about management attacks, the need to develop links between industrial networks in local areas, the need to be flexible and work with other militant workers on immediate campaigns and to provide realistic and effective courses of action for our supporters and new members.

In conclusion, the conference was felt to be a great success by all who attended. After some concluding remarks from the Chair for the day, we reconvened in the bar and indulged in further discussion and some well-deserved liquid refreshment. Thanks must go to the organisers of the day who did a flawless job, we went away informed and greatly encouraged for the struggles to come.

Railway at the end of the last century. In one book on locomotive design the index reads: "Webb, Francis - his incompetence".

Many of his early engines were quite outstanding - they were no faster or more powerful than other designs and yet were more expensive, less efficient and much worse at starting. Despite this, he improved on them in such a way that they would frequently not start at all. This Tuetonic class of locomotive, for example, had two pairs of driving wheels which were not connected and were capable of turning simultaneously in opposite directions. The engine would remain motionless puffing violently, with the two pairs of wheels spinning to no effect. To overcome this problem the LNWR frequently had to use two engines, one of Webb's and the other of a different design, simply to get the train started.