

New Labour.....

cont from page one....

Wouldn't it be far better if we come to terms with the momentous changes that have taken place in the economy? Instead of looking back, activists should spend their time looking for new ways to fight the de-regulated and increasingly part-time labour market. Instead of seeking to send yet more activists into the cosy world of parliamentary splendour it would be much better to build an organisation in the heart of the workplace and working class communities which would help to fight the many day to day problems facing the working class and link these struggles to the need for revolutionary change.

LETTER

Dear TW,
Those highway robbers, Stagecoach, have been awarded the franchise for South West Trains, despite huge public concern about the whole privatisation process. The government and Stagecoach claim they will invest more than BR would.

In South London, Stagecoach took over Selkent Buses last year, promising the same. Most of the fleet is in an appalling condition, with faulty brakes and paint peeling inside. They have bought a few new single deck buses, used for the routes in the posher parts in Bromley, but too small for busy inner city routes. They have neither the workers nor the passengers interests at heart, only the shareholders.

MH, South East London.

LOCAL CONTACT

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

FRANCE: TRANSPORT WORKERS UNITED

December's wave of strikes in France has demonstrated one thing which TW has been calling for ever since our first issue. That is that united action by rail, bus and underground workers is an effective weapon at our disposal.

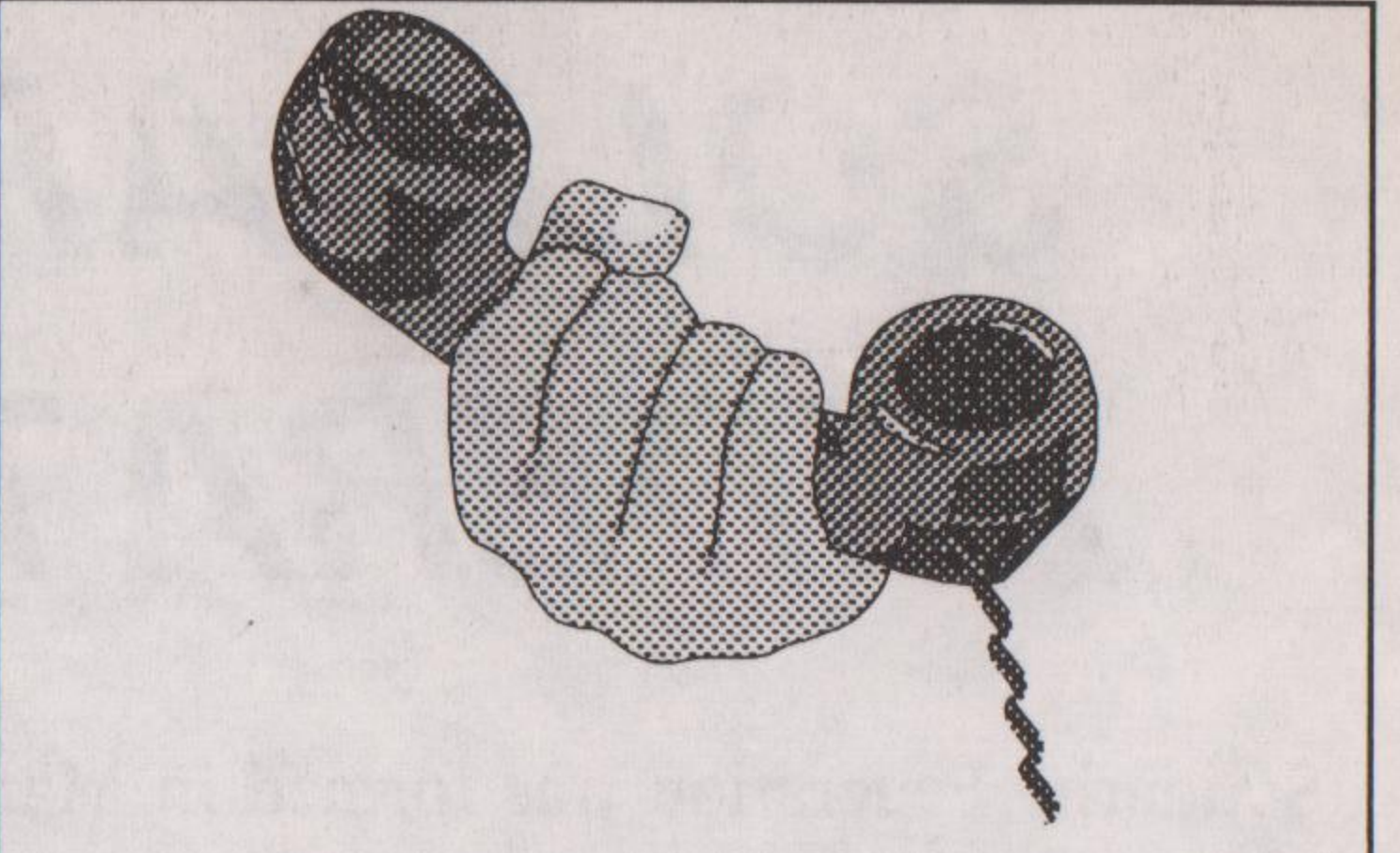
Facing a threatened 10,000km cut in railway lines and 30-50,000 job losses railway workers provided the initial impetus to the strike movement. They were quickly joined by other public sector workers protesting at planned cuts in welfare provisions.

Together the rail, bus and metro workers were able to virtually shut down Paris and many other big cities. Even lorry drivers were getting in on the act in some areas by blockading major roads. All in all the transport system was brought quickly to a standstill. We only hope that British transport workers will remember the example of their French comrades.



USA: TRANSPORTATION TERRORISM

That's the name given by a spokesdrone from the American AA to a piece of direct action carried out by Justice for Janitors in Washington DC in December. Using a school bus they blocked one of the US capital's main bridges causing traffic chaos for 3 hours after the normal morning rush hour. This is an excellent use of direct action that transport workers especially might be able to use when necessary especially in areas vulnerable to traffic chaos. By the way, Justice for Janitors probably delayed many of the real Washington terrorists on their way to the Pentagon, only one mile away.



You can now contact TW by telephone at:
01603 611072

This is a 24-hour answer phone, so if you have any news, views or problems don't hesitate to get in touch immediately.

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July-December '95:
Many thanks to all those who have contributed. Your continued support is vital.



C., Bristol - £10; T&G branches - £25; R., Manchester - £7.50; M., London. - £10.
Total: £52.50.

CONTACTS

- Education Workers' Network**
PO Box 29, South West PDO,
Manchester, M15 5HW
- Norwich Solidarity Centre**
PO Box 73, Norwich, NR3 1QD
- Public Service Workers Network**
PO Box 29, South West PDO,
Manchester, M15 5HW
- Solidarity Federation**
PO Box 29, South West PDO,
Manchester, M15 5HW

TRANSPORT WORKER

By Transport Workers - For Transport Workers

No. 10 Winter 1995/6 FREE/DONATION

NEW LABOUR - SAME AS THE OLD LABOUR

It would appear increasingly likely that the Tories will lose the next election. Blair's tactic of stealing Tory policies and giving them a caring veneer is proving successful with Labour enjoying a massive lead in the opinion polls. Though it is understandable that many working class people would welcome the election of a Labour government, on the grounds that anything would be better than the present lot, it must be questioned what, if any, gain a Labour victory would bring for the working class.

OUTLAWED

Labour's attitude towards the unions at present is to accept the unions' money while at the SAME time treating them publicly as if they were emitting an anti-social odour. On coming to power they have promised to introduce legislation which would ensure the right of workers to join a union but make it quite clear that the barrage of anti-union legislation will remain in place. Thus, while workers will be able to join unions at the same time they will be outlawed from using union power to defend themselves.

Meanwhile they are making it quite clear that capitalism will remain unrestricted in its right to exploit. The commitment to a minimum wage now looks like nothing more than setting the level so low that in reality it will merely enshrine in law capitalism's right to pay slave wages. As for re-nationalising privatised industries, this is no longer on the agenda, with even the commitment to reverse the crazy notion of rail privatisation now being dropped by Labour.

The Labour Party's much-vaunted commitment to full employment now seems to be nothing more than a commitment to yet more training schemes instead of real jobs, some of which, according to Gordon Brown, will be compulsory.

FINAL STRAW

The transformation of the Labour Party into the Tory Party in all but name has been too much for many Labour Party activists to stomach. Most notable among these is Arthur Scargill who has now proposed the formation of a new socialist Labour Party. In the statement issued by Scargill it appears that the decision to drop Clause Four from Labour's constitution was the final straw that prompted his decision to leave.

Instead of looking back, activists should spend their time looking for new ways to fight the de-regulated and increasingly part-time labour market.

He argues that dropping Clause Four was, in effect, a betrayal of the Labour Party's socialist commitment to common ownership. Well, much as we may respect Arthur Scargill, are we really being asked to believe that prior to Blair becoming leader Labour was committed to common ownership? The temptation is to now list Labour governments' appalling record in its treatment of ordinary working class people, let alone the absurd idea that Labour in power really had the slightest intention of overthrowing capitalism.

But why get involved in such sterile argument? The sad thing is that if Scargill's call is heeded many grass roots trades unionists, having spent years

trying to reform the Labour Party, are now set to invest more effort in attempting to establish a new Labour Party. It must be asked: what is the point? If the task of the new party is to seek common ownership then surely the failure of the existing Labour Party has shown that this can never be achieved through the social democratic parliamentary system. One can only imagine the reaction of the ruling class if it ever got to the stage where a militant Labour Party voted in parliament to seize the commanding heights of the economy.

GLOBAL FINANCE

If, however, the aim of the new party is to re-establish a left-of-centre social democratic party, again the failure of the existing Labour Party illustrates the futility of this task. The move to the right of the Labour Party has as much to do with the changes to the world economy as it has to do with the need to win over middle class voters. The old Keynesian-inspired left social democratic idea of the nation state intervening in the economy to increase demand in order to maintain full employment is no longer feasible. Any attempt by an individual government to inject massive public spending would only unleash an attack on the economy in this new era of unrestricted global finance.

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Manage'?

THE McGEER-STEVENSON-BRYAN ROADSHOW

The following is part of a leaflet which has recently been circulated by TWN around White Arrow depots across the country.

With McGeer having slimed his way into TNT Newsfast (see TW9 - Rat Reaps Reward), and Stevenson having bounced his way back to the Passenger Transport trade group, the jury's still out on Danny Bryan. Whilst 1995's pay award might have seemed a neat piece of negotiating by the aforementioned brother Bryan, it has to be looked at in the light of rising inflation and pay awards elsewhere, not to mention the fact that the company were running out of scope to use TFP (Tax Free Pay) to offset real increases in basic rates. We here at *Transport Worker* will be keeping a close watch on how he deals with not just the 1996 pay negotiations but also with that blight on all White Arrow workers - **Work Study!**

Speaking of which, *TW* hopes all ancillaries, sorters and HDD (heavy goods) staff keep in mind how PD

(parcels) drivers have been shafted by Work Study, especially ancillaries who have been screaming for a bonus scheme for years. You need to make sure that any bonus scheme you agree to is not based on Work Study which is only devised to cut jobs, make you work harder and pay you less in the long run. For further details see the *White Arrow Workers Survival Guide* produced by TWN.

While we're on the subject of Work Study *TW* would like to pay tribute to the HDD warehouse staff who have stubbornly resisted Work Study in the face of a union which has bent over backwards to appease management. Whilst negotiations were taking place at one location the company, with the full knowledge of other T&G officers, were quietly slipping it in the back door at the other 2 depots. So much for honest negotiating!

And another thing which has been shoved through the door at HDD without so much as a whimper is Roadshow,

which PD drivers will know as SMS, a scheme to make drivers work harder, longer and for less money. Let's hope those who have yet to suffer it have the same bottle as their warehouse comrades.

WHITE ARROW WORKERS SURVIVAL GUIDE

With sections on

- ◆ Counselling Sessions,
- ◆ Discipline,
- ◆ the White Book Agreement,
- ◆ the Sickness Scheme,
- ◆ Work Study
- ◆ T&G Officers

this handbook contains much information the company and the union would prefer you not to know.

For your copy or copies write to: TWN, PO Box 73, Norwich, NR3 1QD, or phone 01603 611072.

SACKED FOR JOINING A UNION

On October 31st 45 workers at J.J. Fast Food Distribution Ltd in Tottenham were sacked for joining the T&GWU. These workers were working 60-70 hours a week for a pittance with no overtime, sick or holiday pay. Drivers were forced to pay out of their own pockets for any parking fines and any counterfeited money they may have been given. In the last 6 years they have seen their wages drop by £50 to £130. They therefore decided to join the T&G and elected a shop steward to press their demands. All the unionised workers were immediately sacked by the boss.

Their demands are:

- reinstatement of all the unionised workers
- all workers to have contracts and be in the union
- holiday and sick pay
- no money to be paid by drivers out of their own pockets
- 2 shifts to be introduced in the freezers where people work at -30 degrees.



On gathering in front of the factory after they were sacked they were attacked by hired thugs wielding sticks and knives resulting in 3 workers being hospitalised. The following day they were attacked by the police.

J.J. Fast Food Distribution supply Jenny's Burger Restaurant, Jenny's Burger and Jenny's Restaurant outlets in various parts of London. In addition J.J. deliver fast foods all over the country in their distinctive vans. The locked out workers and their supporters have had some success in London in persuading some of the shops and schools supplied by J.J. to place their orders elsewhere.

The T&G are obviously scared stiff of the laws relating to pickets, demo's, etc.

Therefore the workers, along with Haringey Solidarity Group (who supplied *TW* with this info), the Colin Roach Centre in Hackney and others have set up an independent Workers Support Group. The first meeting agreed that the workers controlled the group and the meetings were in Turkish (nearly all workers are Turkish or Kurdish - as is the boss).

Between 70 and 200 workers and supporters are holding regular daily pickets from 5am while the support group is also holding pickets at as many Jenny's restaurants as possible. These are owned by the same couple that own J.J..

For more info, leaflets or to send donations and messages of support write to: J.J. Foods Locked Out Workers Support Group, c/o Unwaged Centre, 72 West Green Road, London, N15 5NS or call 0181 802 9804. Make cheques, etc payable to "J.J. Fast Food Protest Committee". You can also join the picket line at Mill Mead Road, Tottenham (off Ferry Lane) every morning from 5am.

PICCADILLY FOUR BALLOT RESULT

On a 56% turn-out guards at Manchester Piccadilly voted 83% in favour of taking strike action for re-instatement of the 4 LDC reps who were sacked in August 1992. This is a tremendous result considering that it was a postal ballot and that it is now more than 3 years since the sackings. It shows that workers are still willing to take action if only they are given the chance. The first strikes have already been held on December 22nd and January 3rd, both of which have been successful.

This news comes as a boost for the Piccadilly 4 whose sackings, which were a fundamental attack on workplace organisation on the railways, were a national issue from the outset. It would now be a massive blow for management if strike action could force the re-instatement of the 4. Indeed management are beside themselves with rage over the fact that railworkers are prepared to take action at this stage so long after the original sackings.

It has now been decided to spread the strike in line with the decision taken at the RMT's last AGM. Therefore a ballot has been called for guards on both Regional Railways and Inter-City. We hope the strike can now be spread so that the courageous fighting spirit demonstrated so well by the Piccadilly depot does not go to waste.

FURTHER SACKINGS AT PICCADILLY

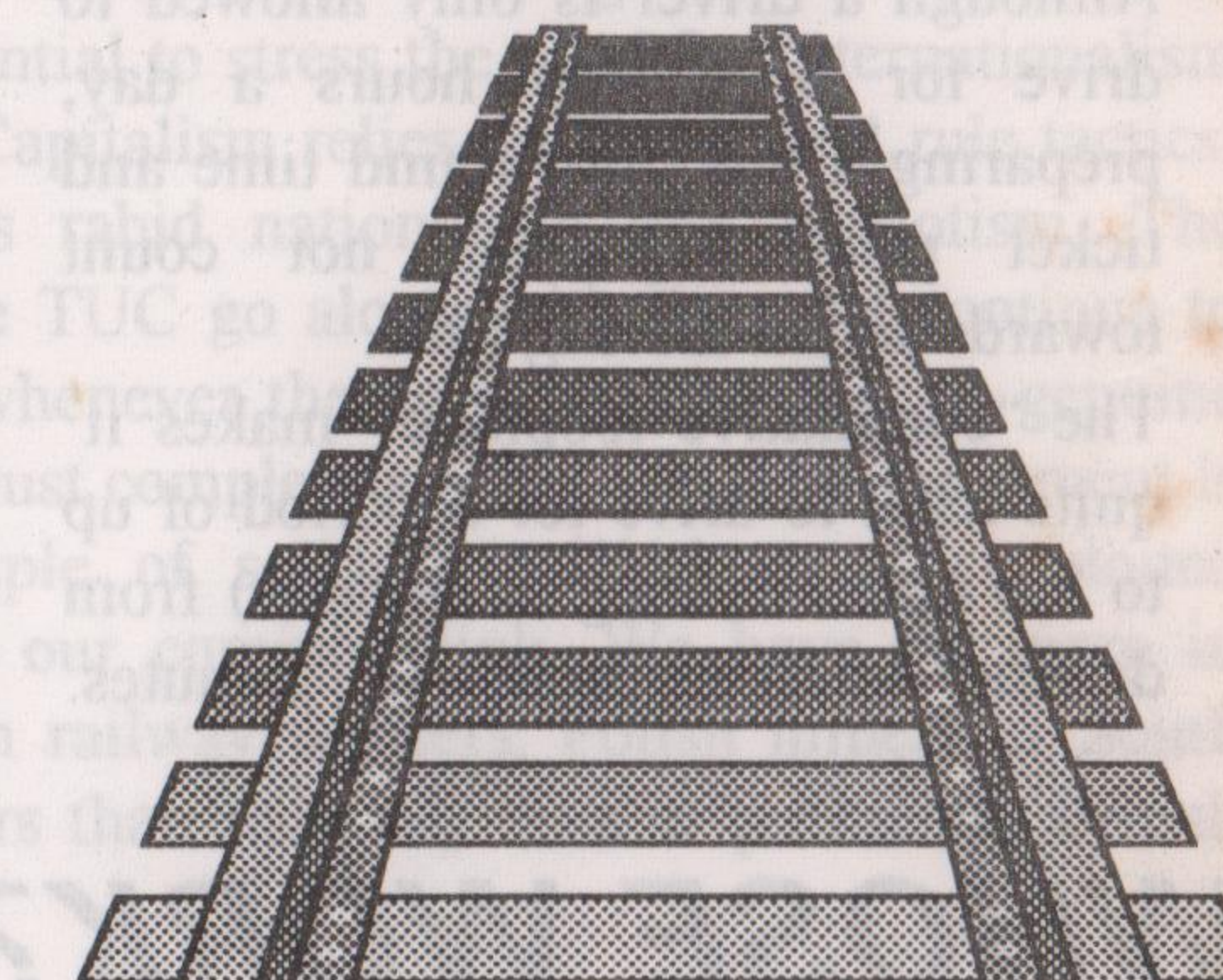
Transport Worker has received reports of further attacks on the union organisation at Manchester including the sacking of 2 activists - Chris Jones was sacked for refusing to cross an ASLEF picket line while Tom Ritchie was sacked for pinning up a union notice.

These outrageous sackings were followed by management insisting that they had the right to dictate just what the local branch could post on the union notice board. They even went so far as to rip down notices they did not agree with. Further attacks included insisting that they had the right to choose representatives at disciplinary hearings, a fundamental breach of union rights. They also insisted that they could force guards to work overtime.

The union responded to these attacks by organising a strike ballot for the re-instatement of Brothers Ritchie and Jones. This drew an immediate response. Faced with the threat of no train service at Manchester Piccadilly over the Christmas period, management were forced to back down and re-instate brother Ritchie. This is a tremendous victory and demonstrates just how weak this contemptible management are when faced with decisive action.

The trouble is that the attacks at Piccadilly are not just isolated cases. Management is engaged in planned

attacks on fundamental agreements throughout the network as a way of breaking what is left of union organisation. To many workers the union faced with this management onslaught appears to be in complete disarray. To stop the rot the unions should call a national rail ballot for strike action in order to re-negotiate the national agreement and force management to adhere to them. The ballot should be accompanied by a massive campaign for a yes vote. This would be a tremendous boost to ordinary railworkers sickened by the antics of this repulsive management.



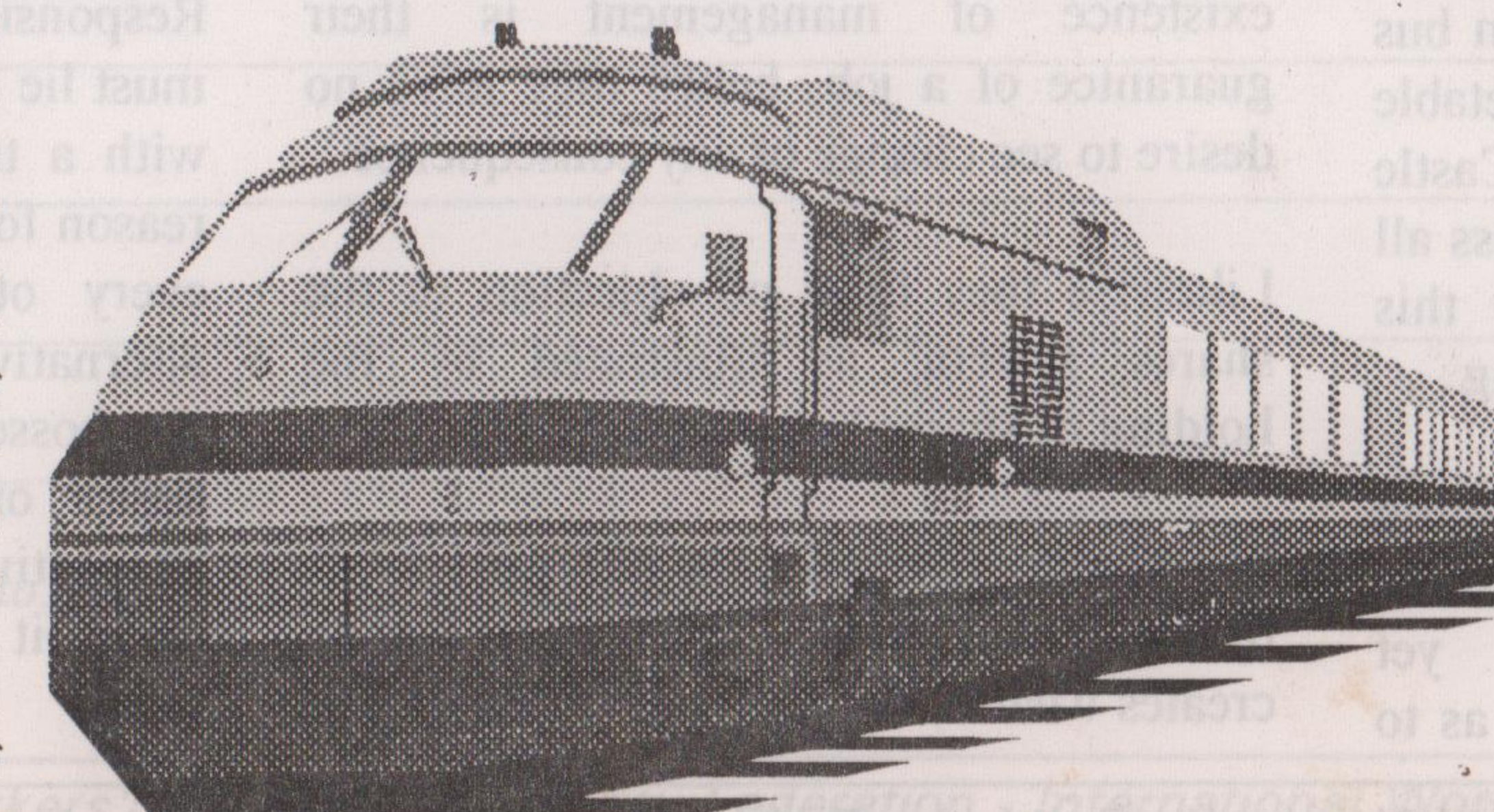
A national ballot would bring the unions into conflict with the law. This should hold no fear for trade unionists. For too long the unions have placed too much emphasis on how much money is in the bank and too little emphasis on the mounting problems of rank and file members. Let them take Unity House. Union strength is not measured in bricks and mortar but in the ability to defend its members. It is only by confronting anti-trade union laws that the unions can continue to carry out the basic task of defending the pay and conditions and the very livelihood of ordinary members.

MANAGEMENT MADNESS

All railworkers will be aware of one of the craziest aspects of the many mad management schemes introduced in the run up to privatisation - the slashing of safety related jobs. From maintenance workers to platform staff, all have been hammered in the name of cost efficiency. While cutting these essential jobs management have been quite happy to expand their own ranks. The inventiveness of management in creating jobs for themselves which serve no purpose and giving them a fancy title is something to behold. A walk around any station will reveal flocks of this new breed of

management all rushing around with nothing to do but to try and justify their existence.

However, many of these jobs, being artificial,



tend not to last too long and disappear come the next round of that other management job creation scheme, re-organisation. But don't worry too much. Management, being management, look after each other. What they do then is pay each other massive redundancy payments. So far nearly £500 million has been spent, with redundancy pay outs on the railways now running at £500,000 a day. Now a sane person might argue that this money might be better spent on rail investment but the idea of a sane rail manager is now nothing more than a contradiction in terms.

OUTDATED PCV LAWS

In the bus industry drivers are working under duress and in excessively stressful conditions. This has resulted in a 10% level of work-related stress illness. Outdated PCV laws have been used extensively by bus operators since the industry was deregulated in 1986. The following are some of the consequences which bus drivers are continuing to cope with:

- Although a driver is only allowed to drive for up to 10 hours a day, preparing a bus, turn-round time and ticket processing may not count towards actual driving time.
- The "cumulative loophole" makes it quite legal to drive for a period of up to 8½ hours as long as break(s) from driving total at least 45 minutes.

- If a company doesn't pay drivers during breaks a working day of 10-16 hours may be worked for only 8 hours' pay.



- Drivers are forced to drive erratically to keep within schedules, including pushing through traffic, breaking speed limits, and after a particularly busy period they can end up trembling all over.
- There has been an increase in tired and irritable drivers with high stress levels and an increase in road accidents and passenger injuries.

These are some of the reasons why meaningful organisation across the whole of the bus sector is a vital necessity.

Now read on.....

WHOSE WORK? WHOSE 'RIGHT TO MANAGE'?

The following is part of a leaflet which was distributed in Norwich by TWN

It is no secret that those who 'own' and run this company (be it ECOC, GRT, or, as now, First Bus) have never had bus workers' interests at heart; they have their own interests at heart, and those of shareholders. For years this has meant paltry pay levels and worsening conditions. Today drivers are leaving faster than they can be replaced as the job gets to be more than many can cope with. Routes are changed beyond all recognition causing chaos, passengers' tempers flaring and we end every day stressed and ground down.

Management do nothing but take, take, take, treating bus workers much like old tyres - discarded as we show signs of wearing out. Even passengers, who provide the revenue, are held in contempt. Where are the notices on bus shelters with route and timetable information other than those at Castle Meadow and Saint Stephen's? Across all of Greater London bus stops carry this information, but in Norwich - nothing.

The TGWU does much hand-wringing and frequently informs us of its fruitless chit-chats with management, yet continues to offer not a single idea as to

how attacks on the workforce can be blocked or even stalled. At the root of the TGWU's inability to achieve much in its members' interests is acceptance of bus workers as second class citizens. This leads straight to the unions' practice of never challenging the management's right to manage. Fair enough some may say, but it is those whose work produces the wealth and provides the services day in, day out, who know best the realities of the service - what works, and what are the shortfalls?

As long as we accept management's so-called 'right to manage', we accept being ripped off and having our intelligence and dignity insulted for all of our working lives.

For the TGWU and RMT this state of affairs is their lifeblood. It allows them to act as mediators and buffers in maintaining each side's position. The existence of management is their guarantee of a job, hence they have no desire to see change of any consequence.

Likewise they have no objection to the shares system, as illustrated by the holding of shares by branch secretaries.

Shareholders' impact on bus workers is by no means small. The work we do creates wealth, the lion's share staying in

the hands of management, to be divided out amongst the shareholders. Shareholders are only there to get higher and higher returns every year and this they certainly do. Their percentage returns are always many times the level of bus workers' pay increases. For shareholders, there is no question of their income being pegged to inflation.

Each and every increase enjoyed by shareholders is one denied to bus workers - the term wage slavery for our situation is no exaggeration. The fact that any worker, never mind trade unionist, should hold shares, is at best blind, at worst equal to being accomplice in management's thieving from workers.

A union that accepts both share holding and management's 'right to manage' has little to offer us. It has abandoned working for meaningful change to improve our working lives. Responsibility for our situation today must lie not just with parasite bosses, but with a trade unionism that neglects its reason for existence. The same is true in every other industry. Any effective alternative to our fleecing at the hands of the bosses must involve re-learning the basics of workers' organisation. This alternative will never be given to us on a plate - it is for us to build it, starting right here.

SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994 by the joining together of industrial networks in the Transport, Education and Public Service sectors, the Direct Action Movement and other groups and individuals. This was a considerable step forward for anarchosyndicalism in this country. SF gives what has been lacking for many years - a concrete base in the working class for uniting struggles in the workplace with the wider political struggle. In other words a revolutionary, social and economic organisation.

Whilst not a fully fledged revolutionary union, SF is a significant step towards this aim. As industrial networks grow in members and influence so does the scope for action. The industrial networks have established a reputation in their industries and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

The federation is not just organised through industrial networks. It also organises locally through "locals". A local is made up of all SF members in an area regardless of network membership. The work of locals is varied: general solidarity with the networks and other workers; local political campaigns like anti-fascism and environmental issues; holding public meetings; producing and distributing anarchosyndicalist material.

Many of the already established locals are working towards creating an actual building or Solidarity Centre to be permanently based in.

The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the IWA, giving it the strength of international solidarity and experience from the larger sections such as the CNT in Spain and the USI in Italy.

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1922, the International Workers Association (IWA) has sections all over Europe, in South America, Australia and the USA.

Why organise internationally? As capitalism has become increasingly international, always looking for new markets to 'exploit', so it is essential to stress the need for internationalism among all workers. Capitalism relies on divide and rule tactics. It therefore preaches rabid nationalism and patriotism. The Labour Party and the TUC go along with this and continue to use similar slogans whenever the opportunity arises. A genuine workers movement must completely reject this. Our movement is based on the principle of solidarity. Workers are exploited everywhere - that is our common link. We have far more in common with French railway workers, Polish miners or South African street cleaners than with any boss or politician, British or otherwise.

So where has the IWA been these past 74 years? Until the Second World War it had over 5 million people worldwide affiliated to revolutionary unions. A combination of war, fascism, state capitalism and communism all but destroyed it. Following the re-emergence of the Spanish CNT in the late '70's, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today there are sections in over a dozen countries, ranging from propaganda groups to functioning unions. The Solidarity Federation in Britain is currently at a point of transition between these two stages.

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please return to: TRANSPORT WORKERS' NETWORK, PO BOX 73, NORWICH NR3 1QD

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