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for your depot

by transport workers - for transport workers

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**TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK
(Solidarity Federation)
PO Box 73. Norwich NR3 1QD**

BOSSES CUT PAY - T & G SAYS OK

Norfolk and Suffolk-based bus company Eastern Counties (EC) are setting up a new depot in north Norfolk whose drivers' pay will be in the region of just over 3 an hour, in order to compete with the smaller coaching companies low pay rates.

The new EC drivers' rates are well below even those currently paid to minibus drivers. The TGWU's full recommendation of accepting this development does nothing but further add to the deteriorating pay levels right across the bus industry. It only follows that the local small coach firms will in turn lower or permanently peg pay rates. Further evidence, as if it was needed that TGWU's bus strategy is concerned not with our needs bothe in the here and now and long term, but with managements' profit margins and share dividends.

To dismiss the necessity of building organisation that spans the entire range of the bus sector, as advocated by Transport Worker Network in last issues' "Strategy for the Bus Industry", is no less than to dismiss any remaining claim the TGWU has of working in the interests of bus workers.

FIGHTING BACK... Transport Worker Network's strategy addresses the immediate and basic need for uniting bus workers and developing a platform of decent pay-rates and conditions through cross-company campaigns and action. This is essential if we are to end the continuous cycle of bosses playing us off, bus worker against bus worker.

The bosses are organised, determined and ruthless. Unless and until we are prepared to match them the deterioration of our working conditions will continue. The "Strategy for the Bus Industry" is the first small step in taking the fight to the bosses. Along the way we will from the lessons of experience find more effective forms of struggle - if you are sick of inaction and moaning, then join the TWN in our work.

*For copies of the Strategy for the Bus Industry, send us an SAE.

CONTACTS:

Education Workers Network - PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

Public Service Worker Network - PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

Solidarity Federation - PO Box 384, Preston, Lancs. PR1 5PQ.

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TRANSPORT WORKER

By Transport Workers - For Transport Workers

No. 8 Summer 94

FREE

WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU WALK!

Since the last issue of TRANSPORT WORKER the RMT has balloted its membership on the PT&R arrangements and after a campaign by Head Office so low-key that it gave the term 'secret ballot' an entirely new meaning - many branch secretaries did not even receive posters and leaflets about the dispute until the last day of balloting - the vote for strike action in defence of our last really important national agreement was lost.

TWN had long campaigned for industrial action to defend PT&R and to defeat privatisation and we regard the loss of the ballot as a major blow to the RMT's credibility, but more importantly to the national conditions of service and pay bargaining arrangements which were fought for and won by previous generations of railworkers.

Already we can see that local management have taken the hint that the railway unions will not defend national agreements with national industrial action. The precedent set by management in their treatment of redundant drivers at Sheffield has now been followed by management at Exeter where redundant Senior Conductors are having their rights under the the PT&R wiped out. The irony is that in both cases all the companies involved are signatories of the PT&R, admit that that the arrangements have not been properly applied and simply waiting to see what the unions are prepared to do about it. If they wait long enough the theory is, the private franchisees will be relieved from the responsibility of the PT&R anyway.

By contrast, the current dispute between Signalling grade workers and Railtrack has been undertaken with an enthusiasm and confidence which have put management on the defensive and resulted in unprecedented sympathetic coverage from Tory newspapers. This has a lot to do with the the outstanding incompetence of the new Railtrack management. However, it is also a direct result of the particularly chaotic form which the Torie s plans for railway privatisation have taken.

contd over

In March this year, workers organisations moved a step nearer to creating a revolutionary union in this country. This amounts to a significant alternative to the large, bureaucratised TUC unions in that the new organisation (the Solidarity Federation), is advocating that workers control their own affairs, use more effective methods against managment regardless of industrial laws, take action in solidarity with other workers, and have the goal of ending 'wage-slavery' through workplace and community control, gearing production not for greed but for the needs of ordinary people.

The workers groups at the launch conference in Blackpool included those from local government, social services, the voluntary sector, bus and rail workers, education and also the British section of the International Workers Association (the Direct Action Movement) and Norwich Solidarity Centre.

WORKERS GROUPS FEDERATE TO BUILD FIGHTING UNION

The new Solidarity Federation is organising on both a local cross-industry basis (building 'locals'), and on a nationwide industrial level with what are presently networks.

A major difference from trade unions such as the TGWU, GMB, UNISON etc... is that the day-to-day running of the organisation is extremely democratic, with no full timers or officials, but with ordinary members fully involved in all decision-making.

The Solidarity Federation is independant of all political parties which it believes are parasitic, and is prepared to address both the 'political' and 'economic' matters that affect ordinary working people.

In the coming months we can expect to see the development of further industrial sections within the Solidarity Federation, the expansion of 'locals' such as Norwich Solidarity Centre as a result of continuing consolidation, as well as events such the promising conference for care-workers in September.

TRANSPORT WORKER bulletin No. 8
print run: 4,000 per issue.

This bulletin is open to you who work in the transport sector and recognise the need for developing an alternative - genuine workers' organisation. If you are for organisation that fights as it, not others see fit, why not contribute to the building of this alternative.

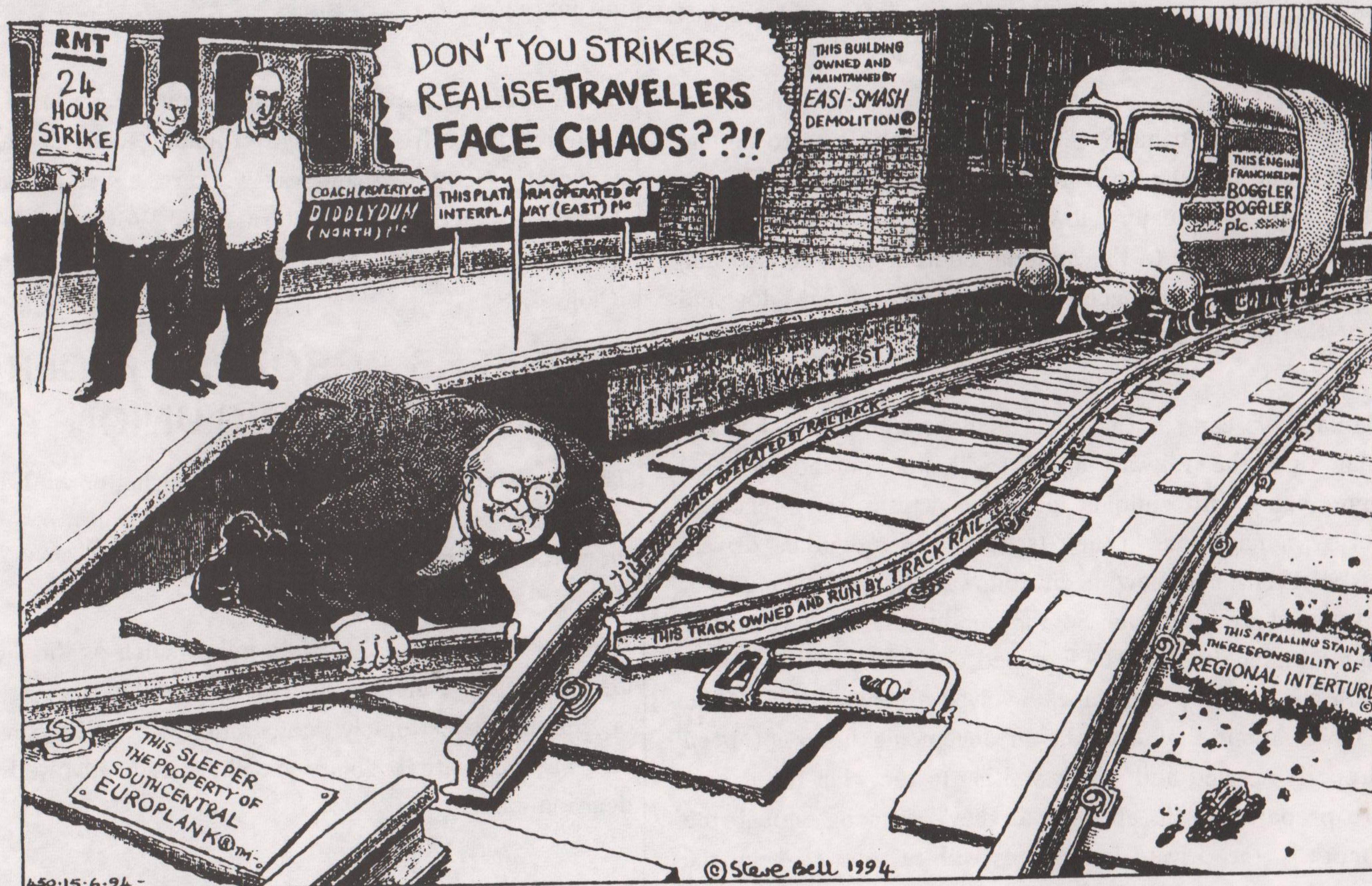
By sending in news and articles to the bulletin, distributing copies in your depot and area, by informing us of what's going on in your workplace, depot, etc.

If what you read in Transport Worker strikes a chord - join us.

For any or all of this, write to **TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK (Solidarity Federation)**, PO Box 73, Norwich NR3 1QD.

position of any group of workers in the industry has not been lost on the RMT. In possession of a very strong mandate for industrial action in pursuit of the claim for an interim pay award, the union is holding a hand full of aces. Not that we should underestimate the RMT leadership's ability to sell signalmen/women down the river, they wouldn't be in their present isolated position had Knapp & Co. not crapped-out on privatisation last year.

The most interesting aspect apart from the the demonstration of the power of the signalling grades, has been the Government's attempt to play the union-bashing card. In a the panic following the European election results John Major decided to flex his muscles by taking on a group of public sector workers. The Signal workers fitted the bill, despite the fact that their pay claim had nothing to do with the annual pay round and no-one would have noticed if they had got the full 11% the RMT was claiming. Now it is firmly established in the public mind that if the signalworkers get more than 2.5%, a full scale public sector pay mutiny is underway.



contd from pg 1

Where once there was once one nationalised railway industry, John Major's government has created two nationalised companies; one which controls all the Train Operating Companies and Infrastructure Services (which are supposed to be bound for the private sector within the year - although no-one seems to have explained the economics of this yet) and another which controls the entire signalling network and track.

This puts the Signalling Grades in the most powerful

The has also revealed that the government's entire political and economic strategy is geared to freezing public sector pay. The public spending target next year will be 263 billion and this makes any pressure on public sector pay a matter of political life and death for this government. For railworkers the stakes have just gone up. After the disgraceful acceptance of the 2.5% pay offer to the majority of the staff this year, the target now must be a general offensive on pay in coordination with other public sector workers.

WILTSHIRE & DORSET COMPANY

Rejected 3% pay offer tied to the introduction of part-time work, by 6 to 1 for one day strikes.

CARDIFF BUSES

Late March. Bus workers have rejected a number of pay offers. Initially a 75 lump sum was offered then 2.5% over 14 months. A strike ballot was being prepared for. The threat of job losses and the union pushing for acceptance haven't washed.

SCOTTISH BUS - JUST LIKE MAXWELL

When the Scottish Bus Group was broken up and sold off, most people suspected the Government was taking us for a ride.

But few could have known what a gigantic rip-off it really was. Secretive Scottish Office ministers had to be pressured into revealing the SBG was flogged off at a bargain basement 96.2 million. That was a cheap ticket to massive profits for some.

And it has taken two more years to expose the scandal of the 150 million surplus plundered from the pension fund. In a seedy double shuffle, money that should have made life easier for retired bus workers has disappeared into a treasury "black hole".

GREY GREEN BUSES - NORTH LONDON

A management 1.7% pay offer was overwhelmingly rejected on JANuary. Management returned with 1.9%.

BRIGHTON & HOVE

January. 1.5% pay rise rejected, leading to management coming up with 3.75% tied to an erosion in working conditions (flexible rosters, longer hours, cuts in holiday pay).

BURNLEY & PENDLE BUSES

May - on strike against threatened changes to schedules damaging overtime payments that top up bus workers paltry pay, and pathetic 1.9% pay offer. Solidarity from drivers for other companies meant they didn't pick up passengers off Burnley & Pendle routes. The strike took place on Saturdays, but recognising that harder action was necessary they were to ballot for strike action.

BRUM BR BOSSES BEATEN!

Two drivers at Birmingham New Street station on disciplinary charges as a result of the pressure of new timetables, had proceedings dropped following an unofficial walkout by workmates, lasting an hour.

Management immediately got the message and backed down. Solidarity's not dead and swift determined action does the job. As if needed, there's a lesson here.

BUS SALE MAKES MILLIONAIRES - BUT MORE GRIND FOR WORKFORCE

Eastern Counties Buses have just been bought by Aberdeen-based GRT bus group, who recently also bought Northampton Transport and Leicester City Bus. Overnight Eastern Counties directors literally became millionaires, receiving 1 million each.

GRT has pledged to speed fleet renewal which which can only mean they have their eye on greater efficiency (profits). But what really gives the game away with regards to what's in store for bus workers is their intention that the company's board should have one employee representative. This is a clear cut sign that GRT buses will do their utmost to marginalise the influence of the TGWU union within the company.

A single worker as representative on the board might well appear attractive. But its aim is to undermine the workforce's collective identity - just as selling shares to workers does. On the board, got some shares - well, you're not just a workers but in the management league. Nevermind that shareholders dividends are always put before - and at the expense of - workers wages and pay-rises.

No doubt seeing as how many workers fell for the share carrot, they are expected to see board level representation as another 'gift'. If the workforce doesn't breathe life into workplace organisation, (which at Eastern Counties for many years has been half-hearted to say the least), then this years pay award may well be the last for many to come.

TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK

PO BOX 73, Norwich, NR1 2EB

REJECT THE PAY OFFER - REJECT TAX-FREE PAY

Once again White Arrow Express has shown its utter contempt for the workforce and the February pay negotiations have resulted in yet another despicable offer after a year which has seen their profits jump 15%. In the past the usual story has been for the company to cry poverty before offering us a miserable rise but this year, even though they're admitting they've done well, we're being asked to accept the same tight-fistedness.

Tax-Free Con

Clearly they can do better than 1% on basic and another tax-free scam. We should be looking for a meaningful rise in basic pay and if this seems holding out until after the 1st April deadline for tax-free pay then so be it. In fact, the sooner TFP gets scrapped the better - there's no doubt that the longer it goes on the more we stand to lose when it disappears. Last year it was worth the equivalent of a 3.3% rise; this year's proposed extension to 15% TFP would be worth another 1.7% - that's 5% gross pay we stand to lose already and who knows what sort of figures we could end up with if we carry on accepting TFP.

White Arrow has made a packet from outside business yet what they are offering us falls a long way short of what we got last year. They say it is worth more than inflation but we are all going to be hit soon by the Tory government's tax rises which, according to some estimates, will mean working class families being £1,000 a year worse off.

Vote NO

To get a pay rise that even comes near to making up for this it is clear that we are going to have to face up to the company and its threats. The first step must be a resounding NO to the pay offer on March the 10th. Beyond that we must be prepared for action if the company are unwilling to listen to reason. That means we must argue and build on a workplace level instead of relying on the union's full-timers, most of whom will do all they can to avoid confrontation with the company - remember Victor McGeer's antics 2 years ago.

The Transport Workers Network is a small group of activists in all sectors of the transport industry which publishes a regular bulletin and hold public meetings. Together with similar groups in other industries, we seek to transform the labour movement into one which can defend and improve working class living standards and which in the longer term can go on the offensive against the whole capitalist system. In short, we are seeking to build revolutionary unions, unions which are controlled directly by their members, not by an array of full-time officials.

LETTERS: WHITE ARROW EXPRESS

Dear comrades,

I write to thank you on behalf of all of us at White Arrow for including our woes in your publications, and to add some points that the author of the latest one doesn't seem to be aware of.

Firstly, I want to make known the lies and threats the company has used to try to blackmail us. Last year, when Tax-Free Pay was first sprung on us, the threat was that if we didn't accept by April 1st we would lose the 10% tax-free pay on offer (leaving only a 1% rise in basic). This year their threat was not only a loss of the 5% additional tax-free pay on offer, but also last year's 10%. We have since discovered that all this is a pack of lies anyway. Having turned down the original pay offer and a subsequent "improved" one, the

TRANSPORT WORKER

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REJECT TAX-FREE PAY - VOTE FOR ACTION

White Arrow Express is still hawking Tax Free Pay despite having made threats that if it wasn't accepted by April it would be lost along with the original 10% from last year. Clearly they have lied to us and equally clearly they are lying when they say they cannot afford to fund a decent rise in our basic wages.

Despite this and despite two previous votes against the "offer", in the next week or so we are being asked by Graham Stevenson, the T&G's national officer, to vote on whether or not we want a vote on industrial action. The fact that 2 clear NO votes aren't good enough for Stevenson makes it clear that he is more interested in stalling for time in the hope that more and more of us will get pissed off with being messed around.

Time to Fight

The company has stated that if TFP should be abolished in the future they will give us a pay rise to. This should be treated as just another of their lies. If the current offer is accepted abolition of TFP will mean an effective pay cut of about 5%. You can be sure that White Arrow, for one, are not the sort of people who stumped up that sort of money out of the goodness of their own hearts. Clearly, we will have to take the company on at some point so it may as well be now - the longer we leave it the bigger the hole we will be digging for ourselves.

To move towards a decent pay settlement we must do everything possible to ensure the vote is maintained or even increased because a vote against industrial action will mean accepting what we've already rejected.

Time to Organise

Even a huge vote in favour of industrial action won't mean plain sailing. In the face of a tight-fisted company the mere threat of industrial action may not be enough and in the face of a union eager for compromise we will be up against full-time officers who could go to any lengths to avoid confrontation. But then we wouldn't be the first group of workers having to fight their union in order to fight their boss.

We must ensure that as far as possible the control of any dispute is taken out of the hands of such full-timers who (with a few honourable exceptions) will do anything for an easy life. This means that stewards and activists must organise depot by depot to keep members involved and up-to-date. It means that it must be the stewards, in consultation with their members, who decide on the form and length of action taken.

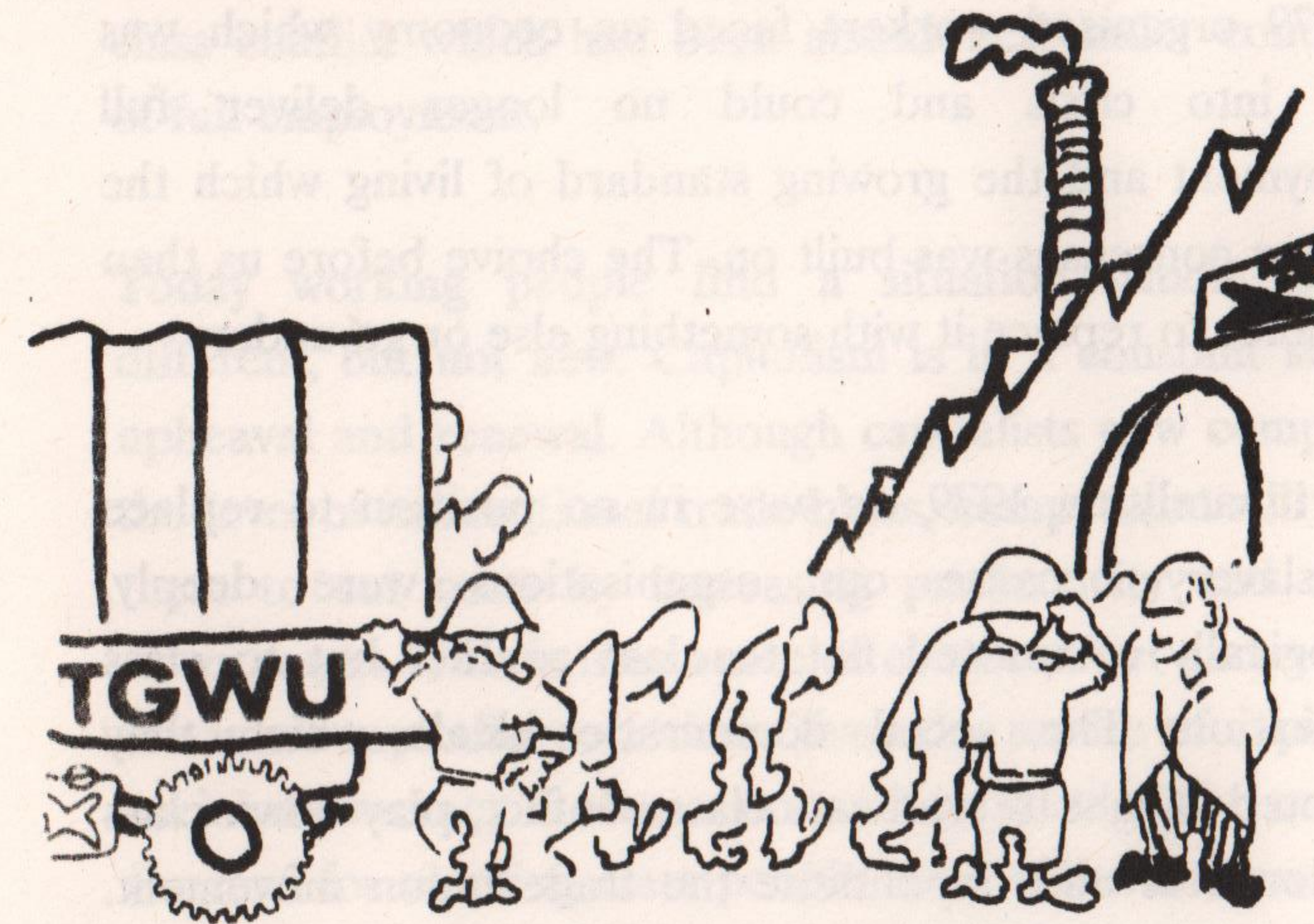
This strike leaflet is written, published and paid for by members of TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK. If you would like to receive further copies for your workplace, want to become a subscriber to our regular industrial bulletin (back issues are available) or simply for more information, please send a donation (cheques and postal orders made out to TRANSPORT WORKER NETWORK) and return to: PO Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB.

April 1st "deadline" has long gone but, guess what - we are still getting 10% tax-free pay. The so-called improved offer, apart from scrapping the £60 sweetener for agreeing before April 1st and replacing it with an extra 0.5% rise in basic from October (worth about £30 overall), included a promise that when the government gets fed up with all the fiddles that go on in tax-free pay schemes they will give us a pay rise to compensate. I, for one, have no faith in the company to honour that commitment. When they see its demise on the horizon they will find some clever escape route by which they can ditch their promise. They've done it before with the parcel drivers' bonus scheme, SMS (Sector Management System), which was unanimously opposed by the negotiating committee yet supported by the union's full-time officer.

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The latest twist is that with White Arrow refusing to put more on the table the union are going to ballot us on whether or not we want to ballot for industrial action. It's strange that after two ballots where the members have clearly told the company and the union what to do with their offer and recommendation we are having to go through this farce. The philosophy seems to be to drag things out as long as possible in the hope that the members' resolve will disappear. It is about time that the T&GWU's officers started supporting and defending its members instead of ducking and diving every time there's a problem, and when this ballot to ballot takes place I hope the members tell them so.



I would also like to let people know just what is happening to the profits that White Arrow makes. For about four years the mail order parent company, GUS, have been siphoning off the revenues brought in by outside business. The way it achieves this is simple. While the cost per parcel for companies like Book Club has risen each year GUS's delivery costs have remained unchanged, which effectively means that Book Club, Franklin Mint, Readers Digest, TNT's customers and many others are paying for the delivery of GUS parcels, while White Arrow keep telling us that there is no profit or very little and proceed to hand out the peanuts.

In conclusion it only remains for me to state the obvious. The two biggest mistakes the workforce at White Arrow have made in recent years were accepting SMS and TFP. We can get rid of one of these now - the other may take a little longer.

In solidarity, (name & address supplied).

EMPLOYEE BUY-OUTS - NO THANKS

In 1986 bus services throughout the country, apart from a few metropolitan areas, were privatised. Now it is the turn of G M Buses, Manchester's largest bus company. The company has been split in two - G M Buses North and G M Buses South - both of which have gone to buy-outs. Workers at G M Buses South have agreed to a pay cut and have raised more than £2 million of the £25 million price tag in return for which they will control 51% of the new company. Similarly, at G M Buses North workers have agreed to a 6.25% pay cut and raised over £2 million (of a total £27.1 million). And in return? - 25% control and 2 seats on the board.

In the long run it can only be the institutional shareholders (companies such as Natwest Ventures, Murray Johnstone and Banc Boston Capital) who will benefit. In 1982 NFC (National Freight Corporation), the state-run freight company, was privatised and employee participation was "enshrined" into the new company's founding principles. Workers initially owned more than 50% of the shares but in the 12 years since this has plummeted to 12% with the result that decisions like the recent £260 million rights issue are now taken without consulting the employee shareholders. With 25% worker-ownership, G M Buses North is already well down this road, but even at G M Buses South 51% guarantees nothing as the NFC experience has shown.

Workers' control is an idea which has often featured in the pages of Transport Worker. It has to be said, though, that employee buy-outs are a long way from what we mean by workers' control - ie, control of production and distribution by workers' organisations in such a way as to benefit society as a whole not just the wealthy few. It is a means of running the economy that can only come be brought about by abolishing capitalists, and certainly not by entering their world.

DONATIONS:

Nov 93 - June 94. Many thanks to all who those who have kept the bulletin going.

£10 Liverpool DAM/£10 D.W. Northants/£10 R.,O'C Manchester/£50 T.C, Oxford/£50 TGWU Branch No. XXXX/£10 Liverpool branch Solidarity Federation/£50 R.M, Manchester/£50 South East Region Solidarity Federation/£100 Solidarity Federation/£50 Public Service Workers Network/£30 Norwich Solidarity Centre/£2 P.M Newcastle/£3 W.H London.

Total: £425

The above only just paid for the printing and postage of this issue. Your continued support is vital.



WHY WE NEED POLITICAL UNIONS

At a time when the discussion of politics in the trade unions is at an all-time low and the Labour Party has been reduced to a Blair / Beckett / Prescott glamour contest (it would have been a four-horse race but Robin Cook was considered too ugly), it is appropriate to reconsider what we mean by the term 'political unions' or anarcho syndicalism.

Transport Worker Network has always argued for political unions. The principal reason for the failure of reformist unions (TUC unions in Britain), has been because they tried to concern themselves solely with 'economic' matters (pay and conditions) leaving 'politics' to the Labour Party.

Transport Worker Network is totally opposed to this artificial division between political and economic responsibilities. Every economic dispute, no matter how small, is at its heart political. Whenever management try to uphold their 'right to manage' and workers dispute it, a political struggle is going on. Thus, a seemingly petty dispute over wearing a tie for example, is political to the extent that it is an example of management attempting to exercise control over our working lives.

Equally, when Bro' Knapp appeared on television recently, to deny that the signalling grades dispute had anything to do with privatisation, insisting that it is "a straight industrial dispute", he is deliberately trying to hide the political nature of the dispute. Again during the 1989 dispute over the Machinery of Negotiation when Knapp argued that the reasons for it were purely industrial and nothing to do with the BRB's plans to soften up the industry ready for privatisation, it was part of a systematic attempt by a reformist trade union leader to deny the reality staring him in the face, that what the State was engaged in was a wider political process to destroy trade union power in order to restructure the industry.

CALLING THE TUC'S BLUFF

This is the lesson that the trade union movement failed to learn in the 1980's; that the real fight was against the British state, intent on smashing the power of organised labour. Faced with an economic crisis in all the Western economies and the rising power of Japan and the economies of the Pacific rim, the boss class systematically planned an assault on trade union power. They identified the problem of the British economy as high wages, low productivity, restrictive practices and a culture of shop-floor militancy. They believed that these were all symptoms of too much union

power which had to be smashed if they were to reverse the trend of industrial decline. The aim was to introduce a low-paid, flexible, casualised, non-union workforce which would attract inward investment.

Thus the challenge which faced workers in 1979; an assault on workers' rights, living standards and working conditions, required a class-wide response if it was to be defeated. Such a response would not only have required a highly politicised trade union movement with a clear agenda, it demanded a class-conscious trade union movement consistently arguing over the years that workers not only had to pursue their interests in the short term on day-to-day issues, but that this had to be linked to the longer term political aim of replacing capitalism with a social system run by and for the working class.

In 1979 organised workers faced an economy which was going into crisis and could no longer deliver full employment and the growing standard of living which the post-war consensus was built on. The choice before us then was either to replace it with something else or go under.

Unfortunately, in 1979 we were in no position to replace wage-slavery because our organisations were deeply, ideologically committed not to class conflict but to class cooperation. The social democratic ideals which they promoted sought to eradicate class conflict, play down class consciousness and depoliticise the trade union movement. The social democratic dream envisaged an ever-expanding economy in which poverty and unemployment would be a relic of the 1930's, social partnership between unions and employers would ensure a rising standard of living through a gradual re-distribution of wealth, social benefits and state education for all would ensure a stable society based on cohesion not conflict. The original aim of the trade union movement, that of securing for the workers by hand or by brain the fruits of their labour, was replaced by the aim of securing a larger slice of the capitalist cake.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

The only fly in the ointment was that social democracy is based on a totally false premise; that capitalism is no longer subject to uncontrollable cycles of boom and bust and had stabilised itself. This false premise lost its last shreds of credibility in 1979. The severe and prolonged economic crisis freed the capitalist class from their dependence on social democracy and partnership with the trade unions as a means of controlling militancy in their workforces. Instead it allowed them to return to their traditional method of labour discipline - fear of mass unemployment to hold down wages backed by state repression to manage social conflict.

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The tragedy for the working class was that the unions were in no position to respond to these attacks. Forty years of class collaboration (it can be argued since WW1 and earlier), had depoliticised the trade unions, an entire generation of workers thought that 'political unions' meant the block vote at Labour Party Conference and 'beer and sandwiches' at 10 Downing St.

The origins of organised labour in this country which were interlinked with the politics of revolutionary overthrowing wage-slavery, bosses and government, from landless agricultural workers in the last century, to new unionism in 1880's, the syndicalist revolt in South Wales, Liverpool and elsewhere before 1914 and the Red Clydesiders of inter-war years, have been kept safely in history books where they can do no harm. It was not easy to return to our traditions of class conflict which had been abandoned under conditions of full employment.

Today working people find a situation which may be different, but not new. Capitalism is in a constant state of upheaval and renewal. Although capitalists now compete at the level of international trade blocs, competition still forces them to cut costs by increasing productivity and driving down wages. This is the source of class conflict and a fact of life in all capitalist societies. Given the nature of capitalism, social democracy is always doomed to failure. The only way forward for working class people is to re-learn the methods of class struggle and constantly to link the short term need to improve pay and conditions with the long term aim of replacing capitalism with a system that responds to need not profit.

THE FUTURE

Transport Worker Network believes that we have to build an alternative to the present trade unions. An alternative openly committed to a revolutionary transformation of society, educating workers and raising class consciousness not only through militant industrial action to gain concrete improvements in pay and conditions, but also constantly raising and debating the failure of the current system and organising ways to implement a new society. Whilst initially some would be attracted to such unions simply on the basis of effective action, it is our aim to convince them of the urgent need and genuine possibility of building a new society.

Above all we must learn from the mistakes of the reformist unions which only organised one part of working class life - that which exists in the workplace. If we are to have class conscious organisation the union would need to be involved in all aspects of working class life. We must look to build a union movement based both in the community and the

workplace. The Union office, Local or centre, being not only the focus for organising workplaces in the area, but where workers can turn to deal with difficulties in all aspects of their lives; housing, health, education, etc. The union becoming a living expression of the class it represents and their struggles, rather than a bunch of old men in suits.

When we say 'political unions', we are about more than simply a revival of militant traditions which the British labour movement used to be well known for. We are talking about a change of culture in workers' organisation which will reflect the changes in our lives the last 20 years.

Mass unemployment and part-time working mean the union can no longer claim to speak as the organised section of the working class if it does not organise outside the workplace as well as in it; thus rent strikes, consumer boycotts, protests against the deterioration of public services must become the province of workers' organisation.

It is not possible, and never was, to reduce working class experience to one single, homogenous stereotype. The political union must reflect the diverse experiences of workers from many cultures and backgrounds, this means assimilating the experiences and interests of women workers, blacks, Asians, Irish, and workers from many other countries. It is impossible to do this without organising in the locality to tackle problems of racism, anti-social violence through to childcare facilities, for example. Equally necessary is an extension of democracy, with decision-making at the lowest levels - workplace and locality, recallable delegates, regular rotation of tasks and positions...

As long as the present unions remain committed to the sort of class collaboration and blinkered social-democratic vision described above, they will be unable to offer anything to their members except the sort of 'policing the membership' role which they played when the last Labour government tried to implement its income policy.

The period ahead will offer little economic stability, but increasingly bitter class-conflict. We need organisation that recognises this fact and does not lead its members into disputes with illusions in any fairness of British justice. We need to start laying the foundations for a society administered on the basis of workplace and community control for need not the profit of a few, by building organisations of and for the working class now.

If you have any views on any of the issues raised in this article, write to TWN, PO Box 73, Norwich NR3 1QD.

EASTERN COUNTIES

STAFF NOTICE

2.3% PAY AWARD TO ECOC STAFF

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who once again, by accepting what is, in effect no rise at all (when inflation is taken into account) have once again given management and shareholders the lion's share of company profits.

This continues to allow ourselves (management) and shareholders to respectively do little and no work, whilst enjoying the benefit of very handsome financial returns.

Again we must thank staff - drivers, engineers, etc., as it your long hours/ hard work that create the company's wealth, and year after year vote by majority to let only us benefit.

On our part we shall continue to do our utmost keep staff in the dark about the £millions in profits over the years, whilst your wages in real terms fall lower and lower.

We trust staff will continue accepting wage-slavery in order that in coming years we may live comfortably and see our wealth increase further at your expense.

S Dawson
S M Dawson
Commercial Director

SMD AJS N/f
18 February 1994
Notice to be exhibited until taken down

Did somebody slip the truth drug to Eastern Counties management? Or is this a case of "many a true word is said in jest"? Either way something's going on in Norwich!

TUC MERGER WITH TORYS, LIBERALS & CBI RUMOURED

Again in the previously unknown spirit of honesty, a TUC conference in July has David Hunt (conservative minister), and Howard Davies (CBI director general), both as guest speakers... This news comes just after we learnt that the TUC is paying Des Wilson of the Liberals £60,000 to sort out the TUC's public relations!

John Monks, new TUC general secretary, said in response to criticism that the TUC must "fit in or become marginalised". Is, we ask, a merger between the CBI, Conservative party, Liberals and TUC going to go ahead earlier than expected?

TRANSPORT WORKER UNITES BOSSES AND UNIONS!

Following last year's condemnations of Transport Worker bulletin by both TGWU and RMT leaders for being "against workers' best interests", and veiled threats that involvement would lead to expulsion from the union (none so far!), depot managers of White Arrow have been instructed to tear down Transport Worker bulletins on sight! Now even the bosses are against us!

All this is no doubt as a result of our exposing managements, and at least one TGWU official's, conniving and con-tricks, in our recent strike ballot leaflets.

None of them have ever been able to challenge a single word of what we print in these pages, nor put forward even half-convincing alternatives. Funny how bosses and union bureaucrats are singing the same song...

Maybe it's because Transport Worker is proving increasingly popular amongst fellow transport workers and could threaten their cushy little numbers?

FRANCE: RAILWORKERS STRIKE AGAINST PRIVATISATION

French train drivers began a 36-hour stoppage last night, halting up to two-thirds of scheduled services in a dispute that shares many of the issues in Britain.

June 22 was chosen because it coincided with the publication of a parliamentary report which unions fear will recommend similar deregulation and dismemberment of the SNCF, the state-owned railway.

Leaks from the report suggest its recommendations could include splitting up infrastructure and rolling stock according to the British model. The high-speed TGV system might be privatised, leaving the state to run the dwindling network of local and regular lines.

The SNCF has shed a quarter of its workforce in 10 years.

MANCHESTER PICCADILLY FOUR NEWS

On Monday 14th February the industrial hearing of the Piccadilly 4 took place. The hearing unanimously decided that the action that took place on August 20th 1992 was in fact official. It was decided that as the four were all branch officials, under the 1992 employment legislation they could not be sacked for "calling" or "encouraging" workers to take action.

The legislation goes on to say that an employee cannot be sacked for taking part in official industrial action. As the tribunal has decided that the action was official, the BR excuse for sacking the four begins to look very weak. Needless to say BR have lodged an appeal against the decision, but if they fail the four's case will go before a full hearing.

The four were jubilant on hearing the decision, it had been the first good news since their disgraceful sacking. Management were absolutely gutted, we only wish we had a video of their faces when the decision was read out, it would make better viewing than the rubbish BR are putting out on privatisation.

It is no wonder they are sick, the sacking of our four comrades was nothing more than an attempt to use the 1992 legislation as a way of intimidating LDC reps and breaking the union where it matters most at the grass roots. The hearing finding means that as long as LDC's are branch officials, the high court injunction, which stated that the union could not call a strike in defence of LDC's, does not apply.

This is a bitter blow against BR's strategy, if they were to sack another LDC in similar circumstances, the union will be able to take strike action in their support. The important thing now is to ensure that the LDC's cover themselves by becoming branch officials or branch committee members. This is of course only a temporary measure, it is a matter of urgency that LDC's become part of the structure of the union by being made shop stewards.

Since that victory however, the case has become bogged down by what passes for justice under British law. The case has been held up whilst the tribunal got around to writing up their decision, a process that took four months to complete. The four now have to wait to see if management will appeal against the tribunal decision, a procedure which can take a further 54 days. All these delays mean that the full hearing, due in September, may be further postponed. This is a disgrace, and only goes to highlight that trade unionists cannot rely on the law to protect their rights.

Here at Transport Worker we look forward to a trade union movement which will stand by trade union principles and be willing to defy the law so future victimised activists do not have to wait literally years before getting even a hope of receiving some justice.

The pay rise this year turned out much as expected - 2.5% - given added spice by the fact that the government has stated that any pay settlement has to be paid for in increased productivity - paid in further railworkers' jobs.

For every year we accept this charade, is one more year in which our living standards are driven down further. A continuing massive shift of wealth between the rich and poor, and to a lesser extent between manual and non-manual workers is taking place. Tax changes alone have benefitted the rich massively.

Lawson's tax changes resulted in the top 10% gaining over 5,000 per week, since '79 the top 140,000 tax payers on incomes over 80,000, have benefitted from income tax cuts worth 9 billion a year...The top 10% own 50% of marketable wealth, the top 50% owning 94% of the same.

Which brings us back to the question of the unions. This year's tax increases are estimated to increase the tax burden on train drivers by 1,048 a year. At the same time the government is being allowed to get away with what amounts to a pay freeze. What do the unions intend to do about it?

Not a lot. We are not prepared to hold our breath hoping they will, so stand aside and allow workers' organisation to be built that can.

TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE BOSSES

Join

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