

WHO WE ARE

NETWORK is published by the **Public Service Workers' Network**, a part of the **Solidarity Federation (SOLFED)**. We are a group of militant workers who seek to promote the ideas of workers' self-management and of revolutionary change in society. **NETWORK** is both a vehicle for these ideas, and a forum for workers to share, discuss and analyse our experiences, and to develop solutions to the problems we face, both day-to-day and long term. We welcome your letters, comments, articles, photos and graphics, although we cannot guarantee to publish them.

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

THE AIMS OF THE SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

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

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

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

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Name

Address

I would like to receive the next four issues of **NETWORK**.

I enclose cheque/PO for £1.50 payable to "PSWN" ☐

I can distribute ☐ copies of each issue

I would like information on the Solidarity Federation ☐

PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS'

NETWORK

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NO STRINGS

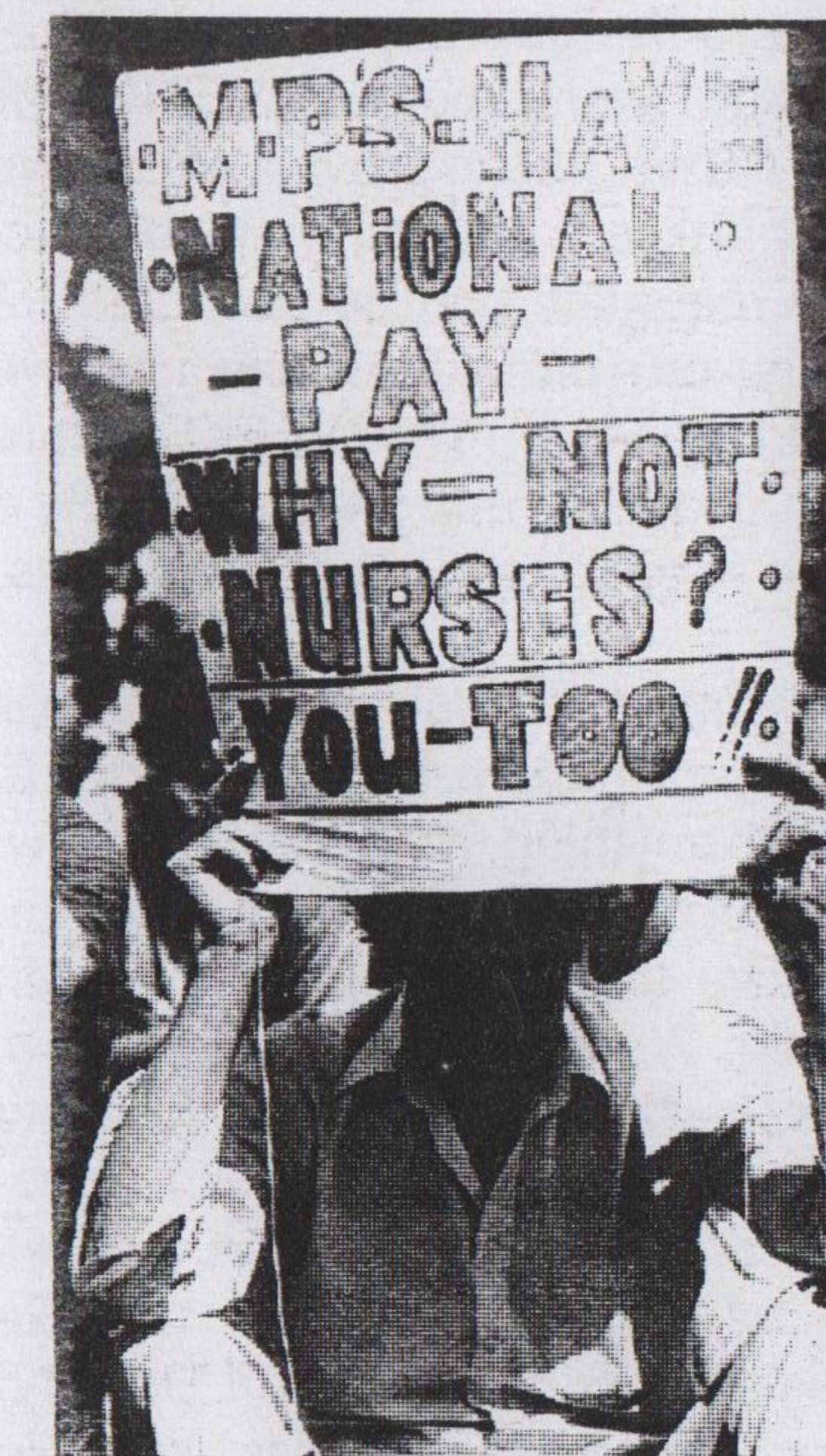
As we go to press health workers in UNISON are balloting on whether to take industrial action in support of national pay bargaining structures. It is vital that there is a yes vote, and that swift and decisive action is taken to secure a national 3% pay rise without strings for all health workers. 91% have already rejected local pay deals in a previous ballot, but without industrial action the government and the NHS bosses will use a war of attrition to bring in local pay in as many areas as possible.

STRINGS

Strings attached to 3% deals being offered locally usually include signing Trust contracts - accepting an opt-out of the NHS and of national bargaining; loss of public holidays; cuts in unsocial hours payments, night shift and overtime rates, etc.; loss of grade protection (heralding plans to downgrade staff in future). At Glasgow's Southern General Hospital this means a £240 pa pay rise, accompanied by cuts worth £220 pa. With the certainty of fighting future cuts alone.

Although members of the Royal Colleges both of Nursing and of Midwives have voted to change their constitutions to allow industrial action, their leaders are prepared to see local deals if the majority of Health Authorities and Trusts offer 3%. Not only does this abandon non-nursing staff (upon whom the great god public opinion

smiles less kindly), and accept the most dangerous of the attacks on workers and the NHS, it also helps strengthen the resolve of management hardliners. UNISON leaders, uncomfortable with the idea of actual strike action, are trying to bargain with their ballot results alone, as usual. They have also abandoned the original 8% pay claim they were mandated to pursue.



To us in PSWN this is sadly reminiscent of NALGO in the 1989 Local Government white collar pay strike. They were unhappy with the 15%/£1,500 flat rate formula, surprised by the "yes" vote, and worried by the enthusiasm with which workers struck and picketted. Their answer was two-fold. First they introduced "selective action by key workers" (mainly Poll Tax staff) on full take home

pay (cut the pay and stop the strike), demobilising most workers. Then, having got the bosses to the table, they took the lowest acceptable offer - 8.8% and no strings (what rail workers had got).

The strings have been introduced slowly in the years since, and some local authorities have opted out of national bargaining structures. More try to ignore national conditions whenever they think they can get away with it (see **Library Action** on P2). The point is that unless the bosses are forced to drop their strings, if they are allowed to drop them just to get a pay settlement this year, they will be re-introduced piecemeal. This is a test of strength for the unions, and any compromise dressed up as a victory will mean they've failed it.

GRASSROOTS ORGANISATION

What grassroots activists need to do is to use the dispute to build organisation at their own level, because ultimately the national bargaining structures are dependent on that organisation. This is crucial for successful strike action, and organising for it and picketting must be used to strengthen solidarity and morale for the future battles. Ultimately, we believe, it needs to be strong enough to break with the timid and corrupt structures of UNISON and its ilk, but if it's not there this is a dream.

A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Welcome to **NETWORK 7**. This has been delayed from June due to lack of copy. In an attempt to open **NETWORK** to our supporters and to get more material in on time, the deadlines for the next four issues - **8-11** - are published below. Apologies to anyone who did send material in on time, or who was expecting this in June.

Political culture

Revolutionary unionists are not exempt from the problems faced by the labour movement as a whole. Part of the problem is cultural, with the idea that organisational and propaganda work has to be left up to "activists", and is not for everyone. The political culture of socialist parties (Labour and "revolutionary" groups alike) encourages this by dividing political activities from workplace organisation. There is a vicious circle where activists do too much, and have no time to actively involve other people, who expect to be given stuff to do. The only way to change this is for people who are at present passive to become active. If they won't share the burden with those of us currently forced to be "activists", we won't be able to help them get active.

Ask any shop steward how it feels. You're taken for granted, have to stick your neck out for people who won't stand up for themselves, and hope that every new recruit is a potential replacement. Because people leave everything to their shop stewards they get isolated, this means a stark choice - stand up and get sacked, or give up and try to look out for No.1 (and the management will still be after you years after you don't stand for re-election).

With union structures outside the workplace more concerned with containment, avoiding sequestration and not losing too many members, than with supporting their shop stewards, workplace organisation is slowly collapsing. If there is no-one to negotiate (and revolution is not around the corner, so we have to) at workplace level, there is going to be no organisation. If there's no workplace organisation, there will be nothing to prevent the break-up of national collective bar-

gaining in Local Government, the Health Service, or anywhere else in the public sector.

In **PSWN** we aim to break this cycle of passivity and activism, by promoting a culture where political activity is not a hobby or a lifestyle, but is an extension of our everyday lives. For active trades unionists this is already the case in the workplace, for revolutionary unionists it must be the case in all areas of our lives. However, our political awareness of the need to rebuild the labour movement from the grass roots, albeit on a different political and organisational basis, has to be matched by a genuine commitment to doing so.

Overcome our isolation

We need to overcome our isolation in as many ways as are possible. Visibility is a problem, as most of us work in an environment where even something as basic as having an opinion as workers is ignored, denied or repressed. At the moment **NETWORK** is all **PSWN** has to prove it exists, we need articles, photos, graphics, etc. Raw materials can be accepted for articles on a particular subject, but we would like them **TWO WEEKS** before each deadline, and please provide a home telephone number for queries.

We want stuff freely given, and will encourage people. If we choose not to publish anything, we will let you know, and we are willing to enter into constructive and relevant debates with people. We are against all the usual *isms* (see **WHO WE ARE** on P8), and will not publish material which advocates or furthers oppression. Articles can be sent on 3.5" 2DD (Double sided/density; not HD/High Density) disks, as ASCII Text files, with file names and hard copy included.

DEADLINES:

NETWORK 8 - 30th October for December 1995;

NETWORK 9 - 29th January for March 1996;

NETWORK 10 - 29th April for June 1996;

NETWORK 11 - 29th July for September 1996.

Thanks to all contributors and correspondents.

ABANDON SHIP!

Readers may remember the antics of Lewisham council's **DIRECTeam** (DLO) from the last issue. News has reached us that their boss, Mushtaq Malik, is leaving to set up his own company to bid for council contracts in services like housing and finance. His present contract stops him bidding for Lewisham contracts for a certain period.

There is a growing trend for senior managers to join the private sector. While individual's contracts can, in theory, exclude them from bidding for certain contracts, it's obvious that their inside knowledge will be used. Malik's "inside knowledge" has extended to dirty tricks and industrial espionage, one reason **DIRECTeam** never lost a contract. Just be wary of that research student doing a PhD on the management costs of your service.

LIBRARY ACTION

350 library workers in Sheffield have won an eight-week strike to retain national pay and conditions for weekend working. They won when leisure centre workers voted to strike in support at the start of the school holidays. Defeat would have had implications for all weekend workers in Local Government. This proves that even low-paid workers with no obvious clout can win through solidarity and determination.

On a smaller scale, workers in Hackney libraries recently stopped the victimisation of a library assistant for refusing to open up without an attendant or a supervisor. **UNISON** members in the east of the borough refused to open up until a threat of disciplinary action was withdrawn. Management had to back down, and have in effect recognised the dispute about grading and responsibility, and library attendants' jobs, but went back on a verbal agreement not to stop pay.

FIGHTING TIPS: Useful snippets of Health & Safety Law

This is a new feature we hope to run in each issue of **NETWORK**. The aim is to give back to people a sense that we have rights as workers, and can claim them. Very often people faced with an uncooperative, or just plain ignorant, management feel powerless, or that only by industrial action, with the attendant risks for almost all of us nowadays, can they win even basic rights.

With unity, resolve and a good knowledge of legal rights, preferably in writing or with "expert" support, a lot can be done without "breach of contract". In theory, under the Health & Safety At Work Act 1974 (**HASAWA**), we have a right to a healthy and safe workplace, and can go to work at an alternative site if the usual one falls short of this. You can make this happen.

There are few hard and fast laws covering Health & Safety, so it is important that we use those that do exist to our advantage. They are useful bargaining tools, for example, the law regarding toilets is fairly clear (see below). If you know that your workplace does not meet these regulations it can be a powerful weapon.

If you are trying to get, say, extended tea breaks, you could go to the management and complain about the toilet situation. Don't mention the legal requirements and argue that as there are not enough toilets to go round you want more. Obviously, fitting these is expensive, so you could kindly compromise and say that if they don't want to fit more toilets, it would be

Number of employees	Number of toilets	Number of sinks
1-5	1	1
6-25	2	2
26-50	3	3
51-75	4	4
76-100	5	5

RECLAIM YOUR RIGHTS

fair to extend tea breaks by 10 minutes to allow for the shortage, as long as they agree to this in writing.

Six months later, once the breaks have become established (called custom & practice in law) and you have a written agreement, an anonymous call to the Health & Safety Executive about the breach of toilet regulations could be made. Obviously, this is an over-simplified scenario, but you get the drift. You can use the law to win basic concessions without taking any industrial action, breaching contracts and risking pay loss or the sack.

Toilets and Washing Facilities

There must be sufficient washing facilities (including showers if necessary), and they must be accessible to all workers. They must be in the area of every sanitary convenience; they must supply clean hot and cold or warm water; soap or other means of cleansing; towels or other means of drying; they must be kept clean.

Toilets must be provided at readily accessible places, they must be ventilated and kept clean and well lit. There is a ratio of toilets per number of people in a workplace, see table below, there must be separate facilities for men and women.

If you are planning to try something around this or similar issues please write in and let us know. The Public Service Workers' Network, or your nearest Solidarity Federation Local, will work with and support you as best we can, contact us if you think your boss/management might be breaking Health & Safety Regulations.

Some people may have heard of a series of demonstrations/parties organised under the banner of Reclaim the Streets. These involve taking over a busy road in London in protest at growing car use and environmental damage due to government transport policy. This is a working class issue because it is mostly working people who live in dangerous, dirty busy streets and who suffer the health damage from pollution, and the loss of local facilities as out of town superstores multiply to cater for car users.

On 23rd July Upper Street in Islington, North London (a fine area populated by solid Arsenal supporters, not just the Labour leadership and other low life) was occupied from 2pm. When police started moving people on at 8pm, the party had shrunk to about 150 people, and the mood was friendly. By 8.15pm 200 full-time riot police of the Territorial Support Groups (TSG) moved in, and pushed and beat people up the road.

Despite appeals for the police to calm down by observers of the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (**LDMG** see article in **NETWORK 6**), and only one bottle being thrown at geared up police, 17 people were violently arrested, and 3 people knocked unconscious or hospitalised. Most of the 13 people awaiting trial are charged with public order offences (everything short of riot). This is clearly an attempt to brand peaceful, inventive protest as violent and to marginalise and criminalise a form of activity in which literally anyone can and would take part.

LDMG is helping to defend those charged, and to fight criminalisation. They need this to be publicised as widely as possible, and they need cheques or postal orders payable to "**LDMG**", c/o **BM BOX HAVEN, LONDON WC1N 3XX**. *Continues on Page 6*

DISABLING BENEFITS

This April Incapacity Benefit replaced Invalidity Benefit, imposing drastic cuts in the income of people unable to work through sickness or disability. Age and dependants' allowances have been slashed, and the additional pension paid to 85% of claimants abolished. Anyone who relies on Income Support because they haven't paid enough National Insurance contributions now has to wait a year, instead of six months for the measly Disability Premium. The excuse for these cuts is that thousands of scroungers, aided by crooked doctors, are falsely claiming they can't work.

Humiliating new "all work tests" are coming in, with Benefits Agency (BA) doctors making people reach to put on a hat, pick up a bag of potatoes, or other irrelevant things. If the claimant fails to score an arbitrary 15 points they will be called "fit for work", will lose sickness benefit and be left to sign on or starve.

This ignores the fact that many of those who will pass the test have no chance of finding work. Many "disabled" people could work easily if transport and workplaces were made accessible for them, if health and safety regulations were followed, and if they weren't excluded by employers' prejudices, lack of accessible training, etc. Disability is a condition imposed by society, rather than a medical fact.

Under the new rules someone with a mobility problem could be classed as capable of secretarial work, and lose their benefits, even if they're unable to get to work and have none of the relevant skills. Similarly, someone who is registered blind will automatically be

considered unable to work regardless of skills, whereas someone with an unrecognised condition like Repetitive Strain Injury or ME (Chronic fatigue syndrome) will be considered fit. The Tories are even doing away with the 3% quota for employment of people with disabilities, which has never been enforced, as part of their Disability Discrimination Bill.

If someone is ruled "capable of work", there is a right of appeal, but if they continue to send in medical certificates and claim benefit, there is a 20% reduction in its value pending the appeal. This means that many people with disabilities will have to sign on and pretend to seek work while they appeal.



Income Support and Unemployment Benefit are also due to be replaced in October 1996, with pilot schemes for the new Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) already in progress in selected areas. This is linked to new powers to harass the unemployed and

force them into low-paid, unsafe work. Claimant Advisers will be able to issue Jobseeker's Directives, forcing claimants to make themselves more "employable". This could mean haircuts, smart clothes (on the dole!), etc. under threat of disqualification from benefit.

As well as the obvious implications for claimants, this will have serious consequences for Benefits Agency (BA) staff. They have been directed not to help fill in Incapacity Benefit forms, and will increasingly be forced to tell claimants that their benefit has been cut or refused, leaving them open to abuse and assault. Management are likely to have a target number of claimants to cut off, which staff will be pressurised to meet. Job Centre staff will be particularly vulnerable when the JSA comes in, as they have to enforce many of the regulations, without security screens.

Organise together

Claimants and Disability groups and BA workers need to organise together to fight this. BA workers should get members of Incapacity Action, the Disability Alliance, local Claimants' Union, etc. to address the next union meeting it's practical to do so. About twenty people attended a conference of claimants, disability groups and advice workers held in Islington, North London in June, where how to avoid and fight the new regulations was discussed.

The conference agreed to publicise the points system to be used in the "all work test", and to write leaflets on how to avoid being cut off Incapacity Benefit. There will also be a leaflet on the JSA, to be distributed at dole offices; and it was decided to contact workers in the CPSA and other BA staff unions to try and organise joint collective action between claimants and workers. Action targeting BA medical testing centres is planned.

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DODGY CLAIMS

While single mothers are the Tories' "demon of the month", foreign (and British) "benefit tourists" have an enduring appeal to the far right. During 1994 the government introduced new restrictions on eligibility for Income Support (IS), Housing and Council Tax Benefits (HB/CTB) on grounds of immigration status and residence.

In April 1994 HB/CTB was brought into line with IS by ending the right to claim it for people with "limited leave to remain" in the UK without "recourse to public funds", and people whose leave has expired. Nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) - the European Union and Austria, Iceland, Norway and Sweden - are exempt from these restrictions.

Denied benefit

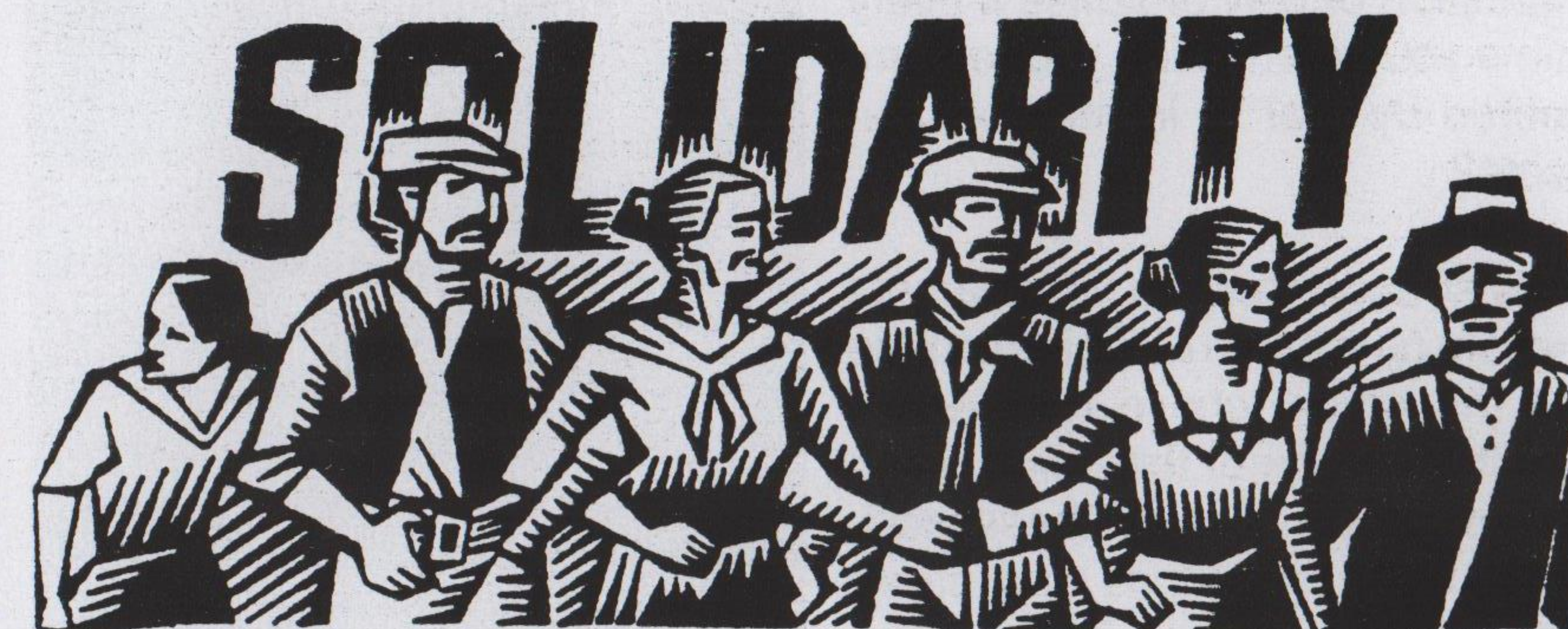
In August 1994 a second stage was introduced, when Requirement to Leave and Habitual Residence Tests came in. These affect EEA nationals - under three EU Rights of Residence Directives from June 1992, nationals of one EU state can only live in another if they are financially self-supporting. To claim benefit is to break this condition, and the Home Office may issue them with a Requirement to Leave the UK. This does not mean they will be deported, but it denies them benefit.

The Habitual Residence Test is designed to deny benefits to anyone, even a UK national, who is not "habitually resident" in the Common Travel Area (CTA) of the UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. Some Tory backbenchers are unhappy with the way this works because UK nationals returning from working abroad fall foul of it. The conditions of Habitual Residence are vague - length and continuity of

residence, employment prospects, reasons for coming into the CTA, future intentions and centre of interest. There is no set period after which Habitual Residence is established, according to the DSS.

Serious consequences

These rules turn benefit workers into immigration police, checking people's immigration or residence status, and reporting "offenders" to the Home Office as well as denying them benefits. For white northern/western Europeans the consequences are loss of benefits, for others they may be more serious and involve detention, deportation and their inevitable effects on family life, personal safety, etc.



While the over-riding motive is to cut benefit bills by targetting "foreign scroungers", the new rules strengthen racist immigration controls, and create a climate in which individual racists can operate openly. In some areas claimants have been called in for tests to get a National Insurance Number, and have been given Immigration Status or Habitual Residence Tests instead. A climate in which racism and nationalism can flourish doesn't just affect claimants, but workers too, especially if discriminatory conduct goes unchallenged.

Working class solidarity demands that we fight these measures. No one claims benefit as a soft-op-

tion, this is about scapegoating "immigrants" to distract from real problems, and about cuts. It also affects all black people, or anyone who is not "pure" British, by implicitly questioning their presence in this country and their rights to citizenship, jobs, services and benefits. It means that every encounter with the state, not just with its more obviously repressive organs like the police, is a battle for basic rights.

Ideally the work, and those who grass people up to the Home Office, should be collectively boycotted. To get to the stage where this can happen, however, a lot of work needs to be done getting the unions to take up the issue. Meanwhile, anti-racist groups and advice agencies need to get the information they need to help people avoid falling into the traps these Tests set. Whistle-blowing is risky, so make sure information can not be traced back to its source.

Successful action

Continued from Page 4

The new regulations are already being fought by the recently-formed Incapacity Action, a network of long-term sick and disabled people and their supporters. Among their successful actions was disrupting a meeting between Peter Lilley and BA management in Balham, South London in July. For further information on Incapacity Action phone 0181 520 4582, or write to PO BOX 9, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, LONDON E8 2NS. For expert advice on disability benefits phone the Disability Alliance on 0171 247 8763 (Minicom available).

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REAL REALISM

This article was provoked by a discussion I had with an activist in my moribund UNISON branch. The National Executive Committee (NEC) had threatened to close the branch down because its vocal support for other council workers under attack had annoyed the leadership of the other local branches.

The NEC's action split the Branch Executive (BE), who are to all intents and purposes the activists. The chief reasons for the split were the implications of the branch being shut down - loss of the office, the admin worker, the legal support, facility time, secondments, etc. Obviously, the loss of all these things would make it much more difficult to organise, but it begs the question of why organise if every time you do anything you're hampered by fear of losing your assets?

It is strange that the BE, many of whom give much of their free time to the union, chose to see this matter as one of the union being affected by the loss of these facilities. Buildings, funds and paper membership figures do not a union make.

A union is built on workers realising our common interest in resisting the bosses and being prepared to act to defend our class interests. One exists wherever workers come together to organise and achieve these objectives.

Many of our critics think that we in the Solidarity Federation are pursuing a hopeless task - we'll never get the sort of membership UNISON has. Our comrades in the French CNT recently won a strike where only one of every 250 workers was a member of their union. Of course, it was difficult for them, but it wasn't impossible. I look forward to the day when union

activists realise that, and stop being cheerleaders for glorious defeat and sell-out.

The Solidarity Federation is currently finalising a workplace platform for organising in a more flexible, modern, effective and radical way. Revolutionary unionism is not an abstract idea, but draws on the living traditions of anarcho-syndicalism in the working class world-wide. "New Realism" has never been the only way to adapt to changing realities, there is a militant alternative to both clinging to the past and to Tony Blair's "future".

Puerto Real:
How to fight and win when victory is "impossible".

The Solidarity Federation has produced an inspiring pamphlet about the struggle of the shipyard workers of Puerto Real in Spain. This might seem irrelevant at first glance - a rearguard action against the closure of an industry considered inefficient by international capital. Unlike the British experience, however, they won.

They didn't worry about respectability, or the electability of the Socialist Party (which controls the government which was trying to shut down the shipyard). They scored a victory over all those who speak of "rationalisation" by organising direct action, and using anarcho-syndicalist tactics. They were able to put years of organising to work by putting the dispute under the control of the whole community it affected.

If you want to read something that offers more than doom and gloom for a change, send a cheque for £1 per copy to "Solidarity Centre", PO BOX 73, NORWICH NR3 1QD.

Continued from Page 3

Get your union to give money and distribute information. Any other assistance, including volunteer workers, will be welcome.

Internal Exile

Also showing that even nice, middle class protests are unacceptable to the bosses and their goon squad are the Kent Police. They have taken to arresting regular attenders at the pickets against live animal exports at Dover on trivial charges, then effectively putting them under internal exile through the imposition of bail conditions as provided for under the 1994 Criminal Justice Act. This practice, reminiscent of such exemplary democracies as Tsarist (and Soviet) Russia and apartheid South Africa, was first brought in by the police during the Miners' Strike of 1984-85, and used extensively in the Wapping Print Dispute which followed it.

Another worrying sight is Michael Howard trying to pass himself off as a football fan to justify sweeping police powers against "football hooliganism" away from grounds. This suggests to us a clampdown on any group of young working class blokes within a couple of miles of a football stadium on a matchday, regardless of whether an offence has been committed. This is another legacy of police behaviour in the Miners' Strike.

Police State

As long as the police are allowed to increase their powers because they can't use existing ones effectively, so need to fit people up and invent crimes they can clear up, trades unionists and other working people are going to face a police state every time we come into conflict with the boss or the state. LDMG and groups like them must be supported, and combatting police attacks effectively has to be built into union organisation. No-one is safe if we are not aware of this.

POND LIFE

The racism/corruption row in Hackney council rumbles on (see **NET-WORK 6**). First a coup removed the council leadership under John McCafferty, with the exception of Housing Chair Simon Matthews. This had no principled political basis, but stemmed from dissatisfaction with a dictatorial and incompetent regime which made Hackney look bad over Crofton, over the witchhunt against lesbian headmistress Jane Brown, and over the closure of Hackney Downs School.

Ruthless Policy

The fact that Housing has the same Chair indicates that policies will remain the same - treating "unauthorised" tenants, and anyone in rent arrears, as squatters, and a ruthless policy of often violent evictions. Except they're flogging all the estates off to the private sector as soon as possible!

The BBC got its oar in again, with a programme which wheeled out Ken Livingstone - friend to pond life everywhere - to vouch for Crofton's anti-racist credentials. Maybe Crofton is not personally motivated by racism, but before he joined Hackney he managed to discriminate against someone who applied for a job with Ealing council because he was a muslim, a complaint upheld by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Crofton also set up the Tenancy Audit Team, now Housing Investigation Team (TAT/HIT). A consistent feature from the original 1990 "investigation", cited by the new council leadership as a "proven record of rooting out fraud", to this year's leak of confi-

dential information to the Immigration Service, is the targetting of 600 staff with african-sounding names.

Whatever the motivation, TAT/HIT was set up by Crofton as an "Untouchable" goon squad to attack the workforce. They are not council employees, and are not bound by the council's equal opportunities policy, so there's little surprise that their actions have been characterised by racism.

The council's reaction to media attention was to "investigate" all 11,000 council employees, a cover-up of Personnel incompetence in failing to check references for sensitive jobs (Rent Recovery Officers), which was the real problem with job fraud.

Strike in protest

According to UNISON, confidential details of all 11,000 workers were passed on to the DSS in 1993 by the council. So the new council leadership's expression of sympathy with workers affected adversely by this rings hollow. On Wednesday 26th July UNISON brought the council to a halt with a one-day strike in protest at these events, demanding:

- an end to the search of personnel files and to the handing of confidential information to outside bodies;
- an independent enquiry into the leak of 600 names to the Immigration Service;
- disbandment of TAT/HIT;
- compensation for any employee adversely affected.

After the strike the investigation of personnel files is being abandoned

- because it's too time-consuming (surprise, surprise). What remains to be seen is whether recruitment procedures are tightened up, and references checked, and if anyone in Personnel is found to be covering up fraud. The council has not announced any intention of disbanding TAT/HIT, or of stopping treating workers as the enemy.

We expect the two issues - racism and incompetence - to stay live. We don't care about anyone's nationality or immigration status, but we do care whether they can do the job they're paid for or not. We are against unaccountable bodies which will inevitably target vulnerable groups as scapegoats for corruption to get quick "results".

As anti-racists we recognise that the black middle class is no more or less incompetent or dishonest than its white peers. We are opposed to incompetent managers who cry racism, or accuse black colleagues of being "Uncle Toms", when they're exposed.

Incompetence and impotence

The final pay-off may be Crofton's appeal against his dismissal, as he appears to have a case that he was stitched up. What Crofton wasn't sacked for was setting up TAT/HIT and attacking the workforce, instead of targetting areas where job fraud had taken place. This in itself, rather than the cover-up Crofton alleges, may have let real crooks off, instead of exposing the incompetence and impotence of highly-paid managers. We can't have senior management exposed as an irrelevance, can we?