

assault on trade union power aimed at breaking what they perceived as the high wage, low productivity practices and militant culture of the labour force, and replacing it with casualised, non-unionised, low-paid workers and a job market based on high unemployment which favours bosses and intensifies competition amongst the divided working class. Only a highly politicised trade union movement could have stood up to this onslaught, one willing to stand by its members and committed to a clear agenda involving both short- and long-term aims leading to the replacement of capitalism with a social system run by and for the working class.

Unfortunately, far from defending working people by involving themselves in class conflict, the social democratic (reformist) trade unions sought class co-operation, playing down class consciousness and politics in the workplace. Social democracy embraced ideas of social partnership between employers and unions and accepted assurances of a higher standard of living for workers through 'trickle down'. 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 severe and prolonged economic crisis of the 1980's shattered the social democratic premise that boom and bust in capitalism had given way to stability, and allowed the capitalist class 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. The tragedy for working people was that forty years of class collaboration had depoliticised the trade unions leaving them defenceless. An entire generation of trade unionists thought 'political unions' meant the block vote at Labour Party Conference

and 'beer and sandwiches' at 10 Downing Street.

The future clearly does not lie with social democratic trade unions. Capitalism, though constantly in state of flux, will always rely on competition to cut costs by increasing productivity and driving down wages. This is the source of class conflict and is a central reason why social democracy is always doomed to failure.

## ORGANISE



## AGITATE EDUCATE

EWN believes the future lies in a revolutionary alternative to the current trade unions, one involving militant action for better pay and conditions now, while also stressing the need and organising for the implementation of a new society. Above all we must learn from the mistakes of the reformist unions which separate politics and economics and only organise in the workplace. We must look to build a union movement based both in the community and the workplace, which offers assistance in all aspects of working people's lives, in addition to essential workplace organisation: A union which is a living expression of the class it represents rather than a bunch of old men in suits.

Political unions with the kind of structure and purpose we need will

have more strings to their bow than the essential labour strike, with organisation outside the workplace allowing for actions such as rent strikes, consumer boycotts and protests against poor public services. They will also involve workers without workplaces in the traditional sense - unemployed, unpaid workers, self-employed etc. Issues which capitalism uses to divide workers - racism, sexism, homophobia to name a few, are just as much the province of political unions as any other divisive tactic of the boss class.

In short, 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.

## CONTACTS

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SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

**TRANSPORT WORKER**  
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## DONATIONS

*This bulletin relies on donations to keep it going. Please send any donations to EWN. Many thanks to all those who made this issue possible. Your continued support is vital.*



If you want to know more about the Education Workers' Network write to:

**Education Workers' Network**  
PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW

# EDUCATION WORKER

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FREE/DONATION

## PRIVATISING STUDENT LOANS THE LATEST MONEY-GRABBING IDEA

What is there left to privatise? Leaks suggest the student loans agency is nearing the top of the list. As maintenance loans continue to push up loan costs because of high graduate unemployment, the government realises another spectacular "error of judgement" and looks for a way out.

A privatised loan system is another short-termist solution which can have only one certain outcome: the biggest losers will be those of us who want a decent education and can't afford to line the pockets of the moneylenders yet again in the process.

Education ministers have been instructed to find ways of changing tuition fees. Patten pleaded they should be restricted to the final year while Portillo insisted they should start in the first. This has all been discussed behind closed doors and nothing has been published. Meanwhile, Labour have not dissimilar ideas for a "means tested" tuition fee system - the kind of thing which may be expected from the so-called electable left.

## GOVERNMENT INCOMPETENCE ON STUDENT FUNDING & NUMBERS WOULD BE LAUGH- ABLE IF THEY WERE THE ONES WHO SUFFERED THE CONSEQUENCES



The expansion of higher education has been one of the biggest social changes of the decade. It was only six years ago that Baker, then Education Secretary, declared a 25-year goal of doubling the participation rate - from 15 to 30 per cent of school leavers - a target which was reached within 3 years. So fast was the expansion - in spite of maintenance loans - that the Government was forced to apply a three-year freeze on student numbers. The UK has caught up with Germany, even if it still lags behind America, Australia and some of the tiger economies. Yet a

host of people - including the Moser Commission, the CBI and the Vice Chancellors - have all called for higher numbers to ensure Britain achieves a "competitive skilled workforce".

Britain has moved from an elite to a mass higher education system. Neither a Tory nor Labour government - both intent on tightening the purse strings - are ready to finance such a system. They are caught between the cleft stick of wanting the pool of graduates to exploit for their economic ends on one hand while trying to squeeze more blood out of the same stone of student and 'parental' resources on the other. Meanwhile, where are the unions sitting? The higher education teaching unions are still pontificating over the membership implications of the new university status for polytechnics, or the possibility of becoming professional bodies instead of unions, while those trusty leaders at the NUS are in favour of a graduate tax. One thing is certain, we cannot rely on the reformist trade unions to uphold rights to education, and as for waiting for a Labour government to solve everything - is it worth even considering whether students could be better off under Labour or the Tories?

As Education Workers, we stand for a true, free and critical education for all, and that means resistance to the erosion of our higher education system and action to improve the position of students and all workers involved in education.

And not just in Britain. Similar "Americanisation" of higher education has taken place elsewhere in Europe recently. Governments of both the right (Germany) and the left (Sweden) have recognised the chance to make students and their relatives pay over the odds for education. Capitalists everywhere borrow ideas off each other: just one reason why it is imperative that we build for international class solidarity to counter such blatant and backward money-grabbing tactics.

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Focus on Further Education  
The Annual University Recruitment Rounds  
All Work and No Pay  
UEA Cleaners Dispute  
Nursery Education  
Political Unions  
News and Views...and lots lots more..!



## FOCUS ON FURTHER EDUCATION: THE WAR ON CONTRACTS

The dispute over new "modern" flexible contracts in FE flared up earlier this year, with a series of 1-3 day strikes across the country.

At Stoke on Trent college lecturers were offered early retirement and there was a stampede. Only half of those who applied were given it, but that still means the college is losing about 70 of its most senior lecturers. The general feeling is that the teaching side of the job has been progressively devalued - by ministers, employers and an explosion of marketing managers, all better paid and better treated than lecturers. Stoke is less militant than some colleges, but lecturers started attending union meetings in droves this year, where even the least militant members have been making furious speeches.

The tension has built up over new contracts of employment which, the biggest lecturers' union Natfhe say "abolish a range of contractual safeguards currently in place which protect lecturers against unreasonable workloads". Government is holding back £50 million from colleges until they can show their lecturers have "more flexible" contracts, drawn up by the Colleges' Employers Forum, which is headed by Roger Ward - a former trade union official turned union basher.

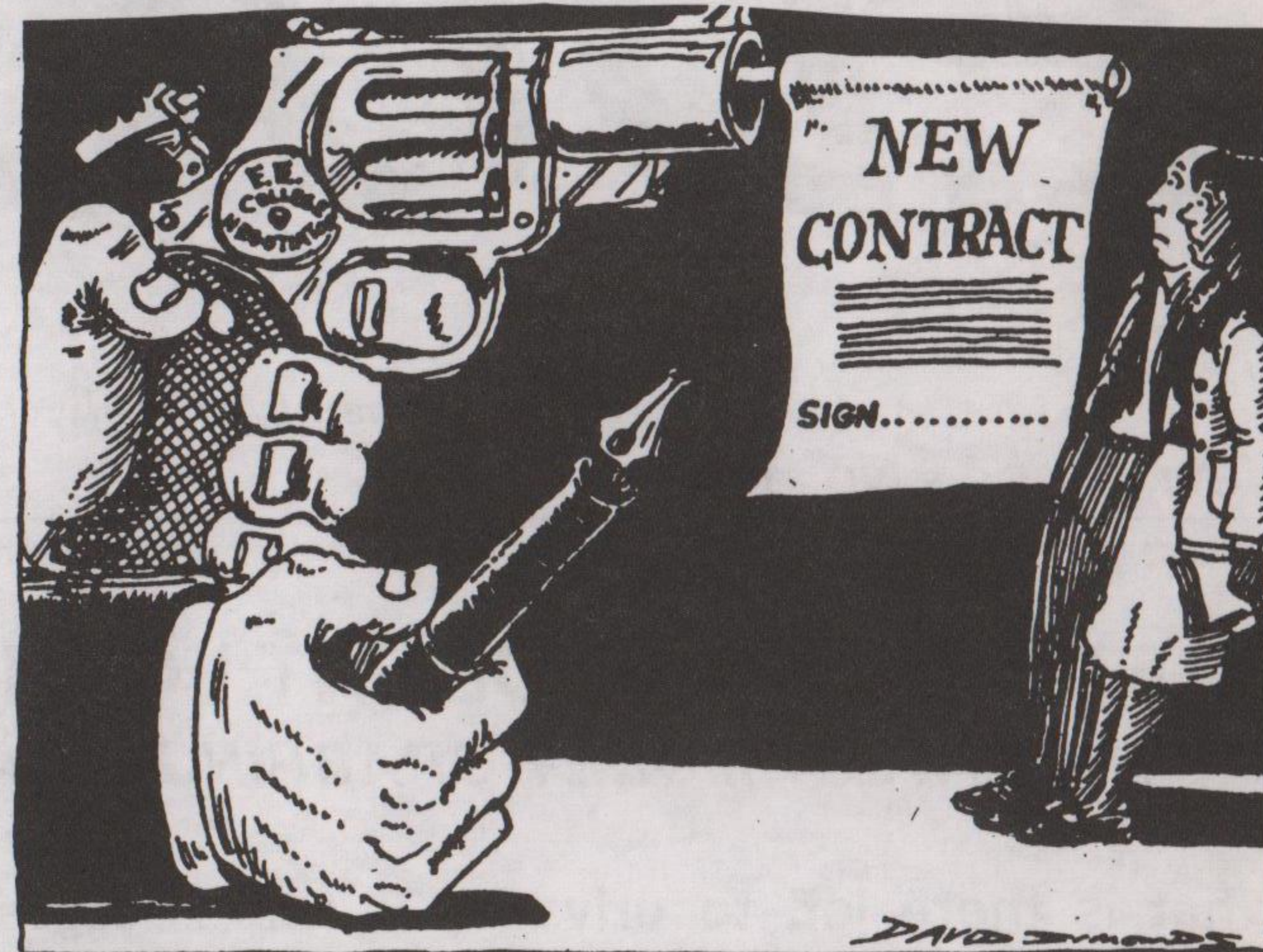
Natfhe put forward its own alternative proposals which, it claims, met the demand for greater flexibility, and which in fact sold its members down the river. However, the CEF insisted on acceptance of the whole of its new contract and subsequently took out an injunction to prevent a planned 1-day strike, because Natfhe did not give the employers a list of the members who were being balloted for strike action, as required in the ludicrous anti-strike legislation enacted last year - ludicrous not least

## THE LATEST ON UNIVERSITY RECRUITMENT

The Government's total shambles of a policy over student numbers is having its usual knock on effects - not on those who dreamt up the "first slam your foot on the accelerator, then on the brakes" attitude to student recruitment, but on those in the front line - the lecturers. Its funny (sic) how lecturers do not get paid any more for teaching thousands more students than they did just last year or the year before, and yet, as numbers are cut back, the ever growing threat of redundancies looms.

The problem is most acute in the former polytechnics - seen by many potential first year students as the lower tier of university education (and with at least one good reason - that of relative funding levels). The cut back on total numbers has meant, broadly speaking, that the "pool" of students is not growing any more. Indeed, with the old universities being able to continue expanding by admitting students who otherwise would be going to polytechnics, the pool, for some at any rate, is shrinking.

because the Government first demanded secret ballots before strikes to protect people from victimisation, whereas the new system clearly leaves the door wide open to just that.



Natfhe hastily cancelled the strike, fearing for its assets and ditching its members wishes again. Its members were stunned, and the strike went ahead in 3 FE Colleges against Natfhe instructions. This and subsequent strike actions resulted in disruptions in colleges across the country.

The dispute has left a nasty taste in the mouth of many workers in FE, and has encouraged clock-watching attitude and healthy hostility towards management. The feeling among many lecturers is that further confrontation is inevitable.

*Have you been involved in the dispute in your workplace or do you know someone who has? Wh not write in to us telling us your experiences? Write to: EWN, PO Box 29, S.W.P.D.O., Manchester.*

But this is not the only problem. There are thousands of unfilled places across the board, and twice as many placements through clearing than last year. This stalling of demand has been put down to loans forcing potential students away, poor graduate employment prospects making a degree seem not worthwhile, and the 'drying up' of the pool of mature students.

### TOO MANY OR TOO FEW - EITHER WAY YOU ARE IN THE FIRING LINE!

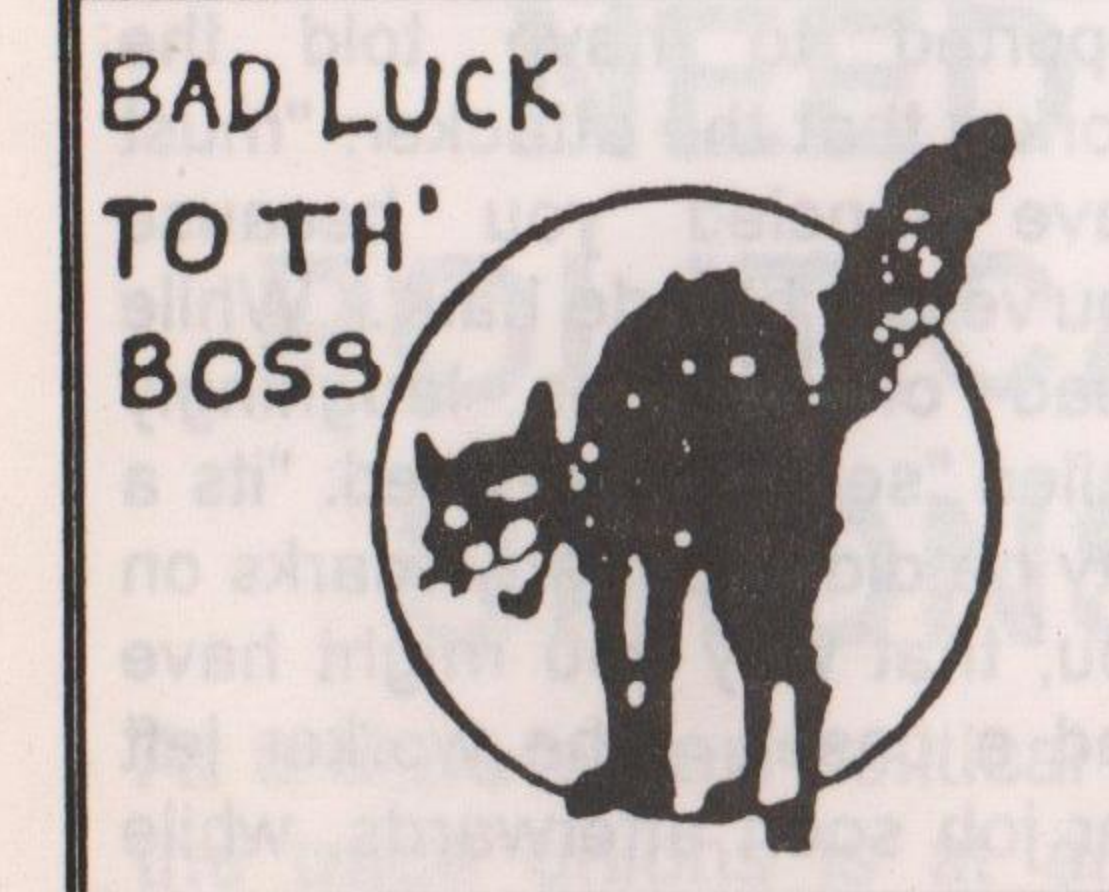
It is not too difficult to see what the implications of undersubscribed courses are, especially for those on temporary contracts - while other courses that oversubscribe are liable to financial penalties in accordance with the recently imposed limits on over-recruitment. In desperation recruitment staff have asked some students to defer entry for a year. The realities - and consequences - of financial penalties are as stark as those of undersubscribed courses for teaching staff. The time is coming when we are going to find out what "the benefits of flexibility" that 'new' and temporary contracts give managers actually are - as if we didn't know!

## COMMENTARY

*Talking to a comrade in Plymouth the other day, he said administrators (managers?) outnumber us (teachers) by about 4:1 here now, and told me in no uncertain terms what he thought of the situation.*

*Whether this statistic is correct or not does not matter. My point is that while the health service has managed to insert new tiers of management, all far more highly paid at the top than the last, so the same is happening in university education. What is more, when the screws are turned, just as it is those in the front line in the NHS (eg nurses), it is the teachers who have to work harder, and under greater threat of redundancy.*

*Managing for managing's sake is on the increase - and it is dangerous for the rest of us. Whenever cuts rear their heads in universities, the least scrupulous academics and "managers" (usually the most powerful) perform cosmetic surgery on their own departments, hoping the axe falls elsewhere. They save their own bacon while colleagues face the sack. This self-managed restructuring is akin to cutting off one limb after another to save your head and body - it may work in the short term but what are you left with?*



## ALL WORK AND NO PAY IN H.E.

Changes to the funding mechanism for Higher Education (HE) continue to cause havoc to staff and students. In an attempt to boost the numbers of students in HE we had funding by numbers - the more students the more money. Universities and Colleges responded with a period of rapid growth in the numbers of students recruited, a growth not matched by an increase in either staff numbers or facilities, thus increasing the work load on both academic and support staff and strains on physical resources. Unfortunately, for those of us working in HE, the government's target figures for student numbers for the end of the decade were reached in the early part of the nineties and the prospect of further increases in student numbers, and thus budgets, sent the Treasury into a state of panic. Same old story; with typical forethought Government slammed on the breaks and announced a freeze on full-time student numbers in HE. Last year targets came in setting maximum levels for student recruitment.

### FINANCIAL PENALTIES

This year colleges are faced with the prospect of financial penalties if they recruit above target figures, thus those colleges which were unable to reduce their intake last year face loss of income unless they reduce student numbers, threatening course viability and staff jobs. This has come at a time when changes to the admission system and an increase in numbers of applicants have made it even more difficult to judge how many students will be coming in October. Following the Court ruling last year where a college was told that it had to honour a conditional offer colleges have boosted the entry requirements for their courses in order to attempt to

avoid over recruitment and the financial penalties.

The run off of all this is that staff, who have had their work load steadily increased with time-consuming methods of assessing "quality and excellence" or whatever the term is this week, have got more students for no extra pay and funding freezes and uncertainties into the bargain. Increasingly aggressive styles of management on a par with

### NO EXTRA PAY AND A FREEZE ON FUNDING

the worst excesses and crass stupidity of managers in the newly privatised utilities and the soon to be privatised health service and railways. All this means that forward planning is almost impossible and colleges are reluctant to recruit, other than part-time or temporary staff who are less likely to rock the boat due to their insecurity of tenure. There has been a 160% increase in numbers of part-time academic staff in the "traditional universities" since 1981.

The feeling is that no one's job is secure. Redundancies have already started and many more staff, both academic and support, are increasingly concerned about their future. We need an urgent debate on how those of us who work in HE can face up to and tackle the problems created by Government and management

### NO ONE'S JOB IS SECURE

tactics. How far can we work with the trade unions who continue to base their whole philosophy around pleading with the government for a bit more of a slice whilst trying desperately to avoid any confrontation which would put union executives' jobs at risk rather than those of union members'. The AUT bosses even consider it beneficial to move towards professional charter status.

Beneficial for whom? Most professional charters prohibit

acting as a trade union. Who would benefit most from the increased opportunity to lobby senior civil servants and junior ministers; executives circuiting the business lunches in and around Westminster or lecturers who find that their right to strike has been taken away and their pay conditions undermined?

EWN is working for real solutions; in the short term we need to remove barriers imposed on students by cuts in grants and lack of funding, and we need security of tenure for staff in order for them to be able to properly develop the

### WE NEED SECURITY OF TENURE FOR STAFF

service they provide. None of this can be done whilst the threat of redundancy hangs over staff and penalties are imposed for failing to meet revised targets set by knee-jerking incompetents.

Our long term aims are fundamental to our organisation. We are working for a non-hierarchical open system of education, with genuine choice and active participation in decision making by all workers and students, through the formation of political unions, as discussed elsewhere in this issue.

### TUC LOGO LAUGH

One of the highlights of the TUC conference this year was the unveiling of the new £20,000 logo. It was mentioned that it looks uncannily like a waffle, and we at Education Worker were inclined to agree. Seems they are stating the tools of their trade in graphic form everywhere now - waffle waffle waffle waffle..





# NETWORKS

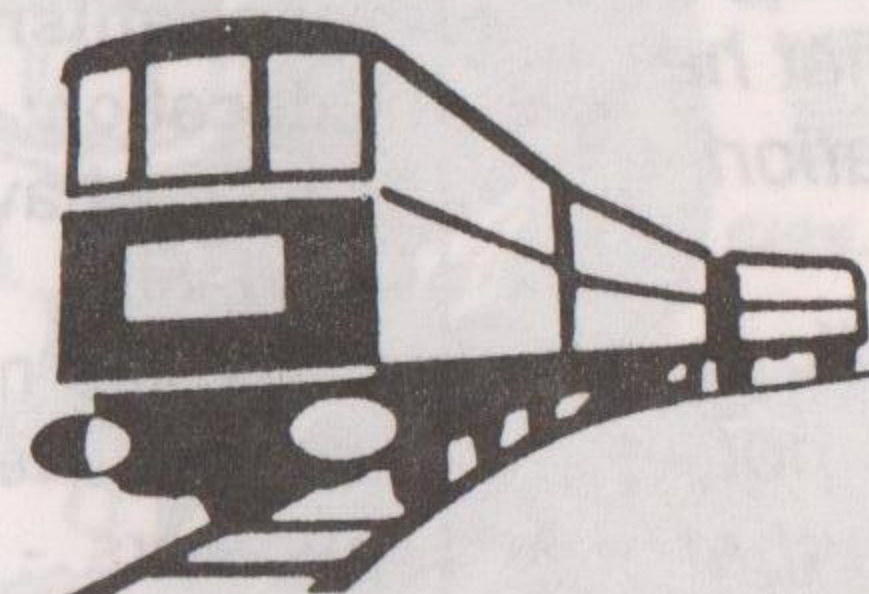
## AND HOW THEY CAN WORK

The Education Workers' Network is just one of three industrial networks in the Solidarity Federation - here we profile the work of the Transport Workers' Network.

The Transport Workers Network has been around now for just over three years. It was set up when a small number of anarchosyndicalist activists in the rail, bus and road haulage industries came together with the aim of producing material that could be distributed throughout the whole of the transport industry. Our bulletin, Transport Worker, now on its eighth issue, has doubled its circulation to 4,000 copies, many of which are distributed directly by a growing list of workplace contacts. TW is also distributed by SF groups and members, and by one-off mail shots to workplaces, a method which has gained us many of our contacts.

Apart from TW, we have also produced and distributed a number of leaflets relating to specific issues and disputes. These have also been well received and, again, have led to new contacts, as well as annoying officials in the reformist transport unions.

We have also been able to organise public meetings in Newcastle and in Bristol, both being areas where we have many contacts. Meetings like these, following up clusters of enquiries and bringing them together offer us our best bet in slowly but surely establishing ourselves as a concrete presence prepared to address social insecurity, degenerating working conditions and put forward the alternative to misery and exploitation.



In the short term our aim is to consolidate and build on these encouraging results which will mean continuing the work we have already done. In the long term, in keeping with the industrial strategy of the SF our aim is the formation of an anarchosyndicalist union in the transport industry. While this may be some way off yet, we are nevertheless encouraged not only by the growing influence we have which belies our present small numbers, but also by the fact that our leaflets and bulletins have already wound up the hierarchies of the established transport unions.

**Are you or do you know anyone who may be interested in the TWN? Write to them (address on back page) for further details.**

## UEA CLEANERS' DISPUTE

The University of East Anglia in Norwich put the contract for cleaning its Waveney Terrace residences out to private tender last September. Due to the intricacies of the agreement Waveney Terrace cleaners were left on UEA's pay roll but, unlike other UEA cleaning staff, without any entitlement to holiday or sick pay. Also, those employed on this contract have a bigger workload than cleaners employed under the old contract in previous years, but have less time to do it in and consequently less money for doing it. Bed-making, for example, has been added to the workload which students used to do for themselves, while hours have been cut from 9 until 1.30 to 9 until 12.

Materials for doing the job have been barely adequate. So much so that the same gear is often used both for kitchens and toilets. As a result cleaning cloths and mop heads get so disgusting that

they probably spread around more dirt and bacteria than they wipe away.

The contract, as ever, was implemented in the name of "efficiency"; not cleaning efficiency, but cost efficiency. And as if slashing pay, wiping out holiday and sick benefits and cutting back on materials

**NOT CLEANING  
EFFICIENCY BUT COST  
EFFICIENCY**

was not "efficient" enough, this summer has seen an attempt to cut hours (and therefore pay) even further by introducing a three day week. The pretext for this was that as the academic year is over and students have moved out, reducing the workload. In reality, however, the workload gets more chaotic out of term time due to annual cleaning and refurbishment work and the constant moving in and out of conferences and Open University students; something

the management implicitly acknowledged when they drafted in extra workers newly signed up on the old 4½ hour day, five day week (plus optional weekends) contracts, making the attempted imposition of a three day week on the original Waveney workers not only injurious but insulting.

The result was a spontaneous walkout and confrontation with a somewhat bewildered management. Unfortunately eight workers, who had come to regard the job as not worth the effort of defending, jacked

**SPONTANEOUS  
WALKOUT**

in on the spot, thus giving the management an easy way out of the situation without appearing to back down. It was declared that the workload of the eight could be redistributed among the remaining cleaners thereby

avoiding the need to cut hours further.

The contempt in which UEA holds its employees was further illustrated last month by the way it acted, or failed to act, when a worker on the Waveney Terrace contract was assaulted by a resident. The attacker was a student on what is for UEA a lucrative teacher training contract. In order to avoid any risk of losing the contract by "embarrassing" the foreign government who finances it, UEA, rather than take any positive action, chose to trivialise the incident.

The head housekeeper is reported to have told the worker that the attacker: "must have fancied you because you've got blonde hair". While head of what is laughingly called "security" advised: "its a pity he didn't put any marks on you, that way you might have had a case". The worker left her job soon afterwards, while

the student was allowed to finish his course.

Under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (EP(C)A), workers who leave their jobs because they feel unsafe or threatened in the workplace can claim unfair dismissal even though they have not actually been sacked. However, the 1980 Employment Act amends EP(C)A to the effect that

workers on casual contracts and any worker who has been employed for less than two years by their present employer cannot make the same claim, thus further eroding conditions for casual workers, usually those who are semi- or unskilled, who can be treated like dirt and then dispensed with at a moment's notice when their labour is no longer "cost efficient". The treatment of UEA's Waveney

Terrace workers is living proof of this, and indeed this whole private contract caper is almost certainly an experiment on the part of UEA to see how far it can get away with cutting into the wages and conditions of its workers in the pursuit of cost-saving.

**What is to be done?**

Workers can only rely on themselves to look after their interests, by uniting in the

workplace to for political and economic unions. Only then can we defend pay and conditions and set about organising and bringing about a new social system in which hours and conditions of work are set by those who do the work and in which all goods and services are freely available to those who need them.

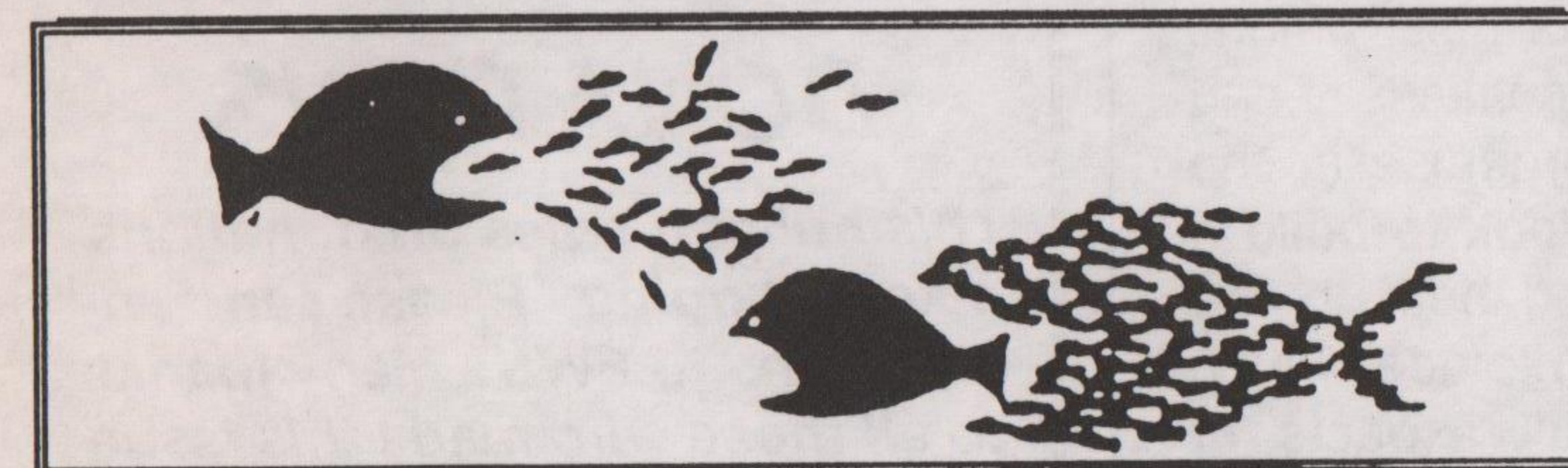
## NURSERY EDUCATION

Gillian Shephard will tell the Tory Party conference in October that all children are to be guaranteed a nursery place in the academic year before they become five. Of the 1.3 million 3-4 year olds only 10,000 currently attend full time classes, about 0.5 million get part-time provision, the same again attend pre-school play group and about 200,000 receive no provision whatsoever.

Shephard is considering a (probably means-tested) voucher or credit scheme to contribute towards a place but although it will not be compulsory. The government will therefore be subsidising private nursery education. Labour authorities currently provide more places than Tory ones, but the latter will be channelling money into the private sector, not into local authority facilities.

Costs vary from about £1500 in a local authority nursery up to £7000 for some private nurseries around London. Under the Tories, the gains in employment of nursery teachers and in the overall delivery of nursery education will be wiped out by cuts in other areas. A further squeeze on higher education funding will result.

Without jeopardising the possibilities of expanded nursery education, we must prepare for the renewed assault on the education system as a whole.



## WHY WE NEED POLITICAL UNIONS

At a time when political debate in the trade unions is at an all-time

low and the Labour Party has reduced itself to its current status of joke socialism, it is appropriate to reconsider what we mean by the term 'political unions' or anarchosyndicalism.

The principal reason for the failure of reformist unions (TUC unions in Britain) has been because they concerned themselves solely with 'economic' issues (pay and conditions) leaving 'politics' to the Labour Party. EWN is totally

opposed to this artificial division between political and economic responsibilities. The two are inseparable; all disputes between bosses and workers are political struggles.

This is the lesson the trade union movement has repeatedly failed to learn. Faced with an economic crisis in the West and the rising power of the tiger economies of south-east Asia, the boss class in Britain conducted a