

Solidarity Bulletin

No.8 Free

Castle Mall con-trick

Mall cover-up with bogus environmental report

As the last issue of the Solidarity Bulletin went to print Friends Provident, owners of the Castle Mall, were hoodwinking the public and Mall workers with a deceptive "green" report they commissioned and then had splashed across the front page of the Norwich Mercury. The report made much of how the Mall "enhances views of the Castle", "integrates with (Norwich's) historic core", and is shopper-friendly.

Had this been a genuinely independent report of the Mall's impact on the health of those who work there, the verdict would have been very different. As our last issue revealed, workers at the Castle Mall shopping centre in Norwich are suffering a wide range of health problems caused by Sick Building Syndrome (SBS). The symptoms

include nausea, dizziness, recurring headaches and migraines, eye, nose and throat problems, depression and sinus problems. This is nothing but a direct result of the Mall "environment".

That the Mall has SBS cannot be dismissed as a figment of certain workers' imaginations. Spend only half an hour there and the atmosphere starts to be stifling. Now many store-owners themselves are both recognising and suffering identical health problems to those of the workforce.

Friends Provident's greed is such that the ill-health of those working in the Mall is not only not worth their consideration, but deny the problem even exists. It came as no surprise that Mall management banned us when recently distributing health and safety information to workers, and as even less of

one to learn that why the Evening News and EDP don't touch so big a story must be because they and Mall management spend lunchtimes together in a Timberhill pub...

Workers at the Mall are advised to contact the Solidarity Federation in order to tackle this attack on their working conditions and personal health.



Staffing Solutions

different name, same game



Personnel Recruitment are a new employment agency and not Staffing Solutions under a new name? So runs the "official line". However Personnel Recruitment

came into existence in the same week that Staffing Solutions ceased operating, in the same Swaffham offices, with the same office staff, telephone number, management and providing labour to the same plants. It didn't take anybody too long to see through that one, not even the BBC!

Less amusing is the fact that Personnel Recruitment are continuing where Staffing Solutions left off. Illegal wage deductions and illegal charges for protective health and safety clothing continue in the same systematic manner, with full management blessing. Unfortunately the recent BBCEast documentary chose to ignore the above abuses in preference to the bogey of "illegal" immigration.

Agency workers
report illegal charges for ear protectors, etc. to the Health & Safety Executive, tel. 01603 615711.

**CONTACT the
SOLIDARITY
FEDERATION
and build a
FIGHTING UNION
in your workplace.**

**Personnel
Recruitment
Solutions**

SOLIDARITY BULLETIN

Published by the Norfolk & Norwich branch of the Solidarity Federation affiliated to the International Workers Association.

for Anarcho Syndicalism:

- support & resources
- action for workplace organisation, better pay and conditions
- resistance to boss dictatorship

for:

- workers' self-management of industry and services & direct community control
- production for need not profit
- a world without bosses, politicians and wage-slavery
- from each according to their ability, to each according to their need

SOLIDARITY DIRECT ACTION ORGANISATION

*a different kind of union
run by workers for workers*

contacts:

transport workers network-

rail, white arrow and bus workers. write to:
PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

education workers network -

for cleaners, cooks, caretakers, teachers,
lecturers, technicians. write to:
N&N SF, at the Solidarity Centre
(address below).

public service workers network-

local government employees, libraries,
social services. write to:
N&N SF, at the Solidarity Centre
(address below).

postal workers launch industrial network-

1996 and the early part of this year has
seen an impressive stream of no-holds-
barred material distributed to postal work-
ers on the strike and management plans
for fleecing the workforce - the **communi-
cation workers network** has wasted no
time in making a fine first impression. For

further information write to:

PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester
M15 5HW.

SOLIDARITY CENTRE:

Room 13, Muspole Workshops,
Muspole Street (off Duke St.)
Norwich
Tel. 01603 611072
Open: Saturdays 11am - 2pm
(at other times by arrangement).

Issues too big for politicians and the election

Whilst the election circus gave us the all-too familiar game of "spot-the-difference", it was easy for a moment or two to forget just what is the real world is.

The task of politicians, especially at election-time, is best described as an elaborate exercise of trying to make us believe that the world is the way it should and must be, and all that is required are some minor, cosmetic changes.

Politicians will never acknowledge that in this society we are ripped off at work, have little control over much of our lives and are expected to quietly accept this - or else we are part of the permanently unemployed millions so useful to "bosses" in keeping wages low and lower still.

The political parties offer us no alternative. Their role is to sell us this as "normal" in order to keep business as usual for the 5% who hold 90% of the world's wealth in their hands. Today's hopeless idealists must be those who believe that the Labour or Liberal parties are even remotely able to bring about any meaningful change.

We reject this set up as one run solely in the interests of the bosses, the "5%". We can't change this on our own, and it won't change so long as we give it our blessing every five years at election time with our vote and done nothing the rest of the time. We have to organise.

The alternative is a society run for the benefit of all, not by any elite or leader, but from below, with direct democracy - decision-making starting in the workplace and community. First and foremost it is the wages system, Wage Slavery, that rips us off. We are paid a fraction of the value of our work with bosses and shareholders living off the difference. Their is no freedom for us in the "accept or starve" choice we are given from birth..

World-wide the decision to reject wage slavery and the boss dictatorship is being taken by increasing numbers of people as the growth in anarcho syndicalism illustrates. In Britain as elsewhere the task of establishing worker-controlled fighting unions and a culture of resistance throughout society is the first step being undertaken to reclaim control of our lives and the world's wealth for all, not just the privileged few.

It's not how we vote that counts, but what we do in our daily lives. We invite all who recognise the need for organising and action, to join us and play a full and equal part in building a new world within the shell of the old.

20th Congress

the 20th Congress of the International Workers Association since it was formed in 1922, was held in December 1996 in Madrid, Spain. Debates covered a wide range of topics, and there is no space to do it justice, except to say that the IWA is growing rapidly and several new sections joined. So... welcome:

CRAS (CIS)

BKT (Bulgaria)

ASAUL (Portugal)

ORGANISE! (Ireland)

AWARENESS LEAGUE

(Nigeria)

ASF (Czech Republic)

SOLIDAD OBRERA (Chile)

ALAS DE XUE (Columbia)

PRO-IWA (Canada)

solidarity centre

bookshop

- ❖ RESISTANCE NEWS
- ❖ ANARCHISM
- ❖ HEALTH & SAFETY LAW
- ❖ SYNDICALISM
- ❖ WORKING CLASS HISTORY...

OPEN SATURDAYS
11-2 PM

who are the Solidarity Federation?

The Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. Small but active and growing, it is a federation of branches and individuals across England, Scotland and Wales. It is a locality and workplace-based organisation of people working to overthrow wage slavery / capitalism and at the same time build a better alternative in its place.

Branches organise themselves in 2 ways; (1) workplace/industrial networks (2) locals.

networks

Industrial / workplace networks do not limit themselves to simple "bread and butter" issues like pay and working conditions, although these are crucial. Now with 4 established industrial networks, the immediate aim is through continued expansion and small victories to establish revolutionary unions.

Fighting to improve working conditions, against low pay, providing support to fellow workers, solidarity to those in dispute, the industrial networks are in many ways in complete contrast to the majority of British trade unions. Where these are run by distant officials whose main concern is that members neither think nor act for themselves in case this should threaten their legal respectability or that of the Labour Party, the Solidarity Federation networks put action and the defence of all workers as it's first concern. All decision-making is made by the members themselves.

Networks promote Workers' Assemblies as the alternative to management dictatorship. All workers regardless of union membership are encouraged to have full and equal involvement in the Assembly, decisions are binding, delegates are accountable and subject to instant recall. Workers' Assemblies replace the power of management with the initiative of those really create the wealth and contribute to society - the workforce. The Assembly creates genuine democracy; it allows for the participation of all (except scabs and management), and for free and informed discussion and decision-making

As industrial networks grow in membership and influence so does the scope for action. They have already established a reputation in their industries and are showing real results in terms of both membership and effectiveness.

locals

A local is made up of all SF members in an

area regardless of network membership, for example the Norfolk & Norwich branch at the Solidarity Centre on Muspole Street. The work of locals is varied. Examples of their work include solidarity with the networks and other workers, local political and social campaigns, holding health & safety courses, socials. The work of the Norfolk & Norwich branch has included fighting for health & safety rights in many workplaces, initiating and continuous involvement in the remarkable anti-poll tax resistance, ridding Norwich of the fascist BNP, and fighting countless workplace disputes. The Solidarity Centre holds comprehensive resources on workplace law, a book and video library, and a well-stocked bookshop, it is also the venue for public meetings, video showings and many other events.

IWA

The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the International Workers Association, a worldwide grouping of revolutionary and anarcho syndicalist unions. It enables the free flow of information and experiences to be shared amongst workers from many countries and provides essential international solidarity.

Founded in 1922, the IWA today has sections across north, central and southern Europe, the former Soviet Union, north and south America, Asia, Africa and Australia. It has a long history of solidarity, struggle and action - in particular during the years 1936-39 in much of Spain where many of anarcho syndicalism's goals were put into practice. Until the 2nd World War it had over 5 million people affiliated worldwide to anarcho syndicalist unions. A poisonous mix of war, dictatorships, fascism, and 'communism' all but destroyed it. But from the 1970's it has enjoyed a new lease of life. Today growth is rapid - the 1996 IWA Congress welcomed new organisations in nine countries.

why global?

Capitalism is international, so must be organised globally to oppose it and build a viable alternative. Capitalism relies on divide and rule tactics. It therefore preaches rabid nationalism and patriotism. Our movement is based on the principle of solidarity. Workers are exploited everywhere - that is our common link. We have far more in common with French railway workers, Polish miners or South African street cleaners than with any boss or politician, in Britain or elsewhere.

- the future is red and black

workplace health & safety feature: VDU law & your rights

A survey by the government watchdog the Health and Safety Executive published in February shows that 60% of businesses are ignoring their legal duty to undertake VDU risk assessments.

The report found only half of the employers questioned, most of whom used VDU's in the workplace, knew of the regulations. Under 20% of VDU users - less than 1 million amongst 5.5 million UK workers - had undergone an employer-financed eye test. UK regulations give all VDU users the right to a free eye test.

But evidence shows it is not only employers that are evading the law - the UK regulations themselves, drafted by the government's HSE, fall illegally short of the European standard - giving UK employers an easy ride on eye tests and equipment safety.



Any worker using VDU's should not have to "request" an eye test. In addition to eye tests protecting VDU users' health, the tests are intended to unearth screen-related vision problems, not be a take-it-or-leave-it perk. All 5.5million VDU users should have received tests. The fear is that our caring UK businesses and government are now set on getting rid of the eye test requirements.

We urge all workers who use VDU's to take up their eye test entitlement, both for the sake of their own health and to ensure that it remains an entitlement for all as long as the risks to health remain.

USE IT OR LOSE IT!

For a copy of the leaflet, Your right to an eye test, visit us at the Solidarity Centre.

MAGNET Dispute - No Kitchen Sink Drama

350 workers at the Magnet kitchens' factory in Darlington, part of the larger Berisfords group were sacked 3rd September last year. The facts:

- ❖ Company profits last year - £27,000,000.
- ❖ Director Marion Antonini's pay rise - £750,000.
- ❖ Company's proposal on wages - average £35 per week cut in wages for workers, following 3 years of pay freezes.
- ❖ Workers' response - industrial action with almost unanimous support.
- ❖ The Magnet response - to sack 350 workers, nearly the entire workforce. Threats, including death threats and violent assaults on 2 strikers. Hiring of scab labour on short-term contracts and slashed wages.



Norwich actions

Norfolk & Norwich Solidarity Federation (N&N SF) along with other SF branches are carrying out pickets of many of the 200-plus Magnet showrooms around the country. N&N SF is calling on other sections of the International Workers Association to undertake similar solidarity action against the Berisford Group companies abroad.

On a recent picket and leafletting of the Magnet showroom in Norwich the majority of people intending to look at or buy kitchens were persuaded to shop elsewhere. Just 2 of those who showed their support were alone intending to place orders of £1,800 and £3,500 respectively. This sort of solidarity action hits Magnet where it hurts, in the profits, and is the only thing that can force a management change of mind.

How you can help...

If you would like to show your support, why not make a donation to the strikers' hardship fund, join us collecting for it, and/or give a helping hand on future pickets of the Norwich and other East Anglian showrooms? If so, get in touch with N&N SF at the Solidarity Centre (Sat. 11-2pm), leave your name and tel. no. on the answerphone or come to one of our monthly action / planning meetings.

Solidarity is not a luxury, but a necessity.

events at the solidarity centre.....

video showing

Tuesday 20th May, 7.30pm

Port in a Storm;

four ten-minute documentaries made for the Liverpool dockers that chronicle major moments in the dispute. These include the work of the dockers' wives - Women on the Waterfront, the mass picket at New Year and visit of US dockers, the international dockers' conference, and the joint action to occupy and blockade the port taken by dockers, anarchists and environmentalists against the wishes of Merseyside Police!

Followed by discussion, collection for the dockers and plans for future support work. (Bar open).

video showing

Tuesday 24th June, 7.30pm

Anarcho syndicalism in Germany, 1900-1990's;

this recent documentary made by the FAU (German section of the IWA), looks especially at the pre-Nazi heyday of the anarcho syndicalist union FAUD. Using the town of Sommerda as an example, members recall their achievements in creating a full and varied cultural life, as well as their successes in humiliating the Nazis. Length: 34 mins.

Plus discussion (Bar open).

Quiz Night!

Another of the now regular and popular evenings...

Friday 13th June, 8pm

PRIZES v SNACKS

INTOXICATING AMBIANCE!

and late Bar...

Summer Fair '97

**Music, Games, BBQ food,
Bar, Stalls...**

live music:

7pm - **The 1926 Committee**

9pm - **North London Anarcho
Syndicalist Choir**

Saturday 26th July, 4pm - late.

(for venue details and further information
contact N&N SF at the Solidarity Centre)

**Norfolk & Norwich branch of the
SOLIDARITY FEDERATION hold
monthly action / planning meetings**
at which future events, campaigns, solidarity actions, etc. are organised. If you are interested in active membership why not come along to the Solidarity Centre and see for yourself... Here are the dates for 1997 -

JUNE: Monday 2nd, 7.30pm.

JULY: Monday 7th, 7.30pm

AUGUST: Monday 4th, 7.30pm

SEPTEMBER: Monday 1st, 7.30pm

OCTOBER: Monday 6th, 7.30pm

NOVEMBER: Monday 3rd, 7.30pm

DECEMBER: Monday 1st, 7.30pm