

The SYNDICALIST

NUMBER 1

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THE FRENCH CONNECTION CONTRACTS Ltd. STRIKERS SPEAK OUT!

French Connection is a very exclusive High Street clothing Company, formed in 1983 by a designer by the name of Stephen Marks. Since this time the French Connection Company has grown and Marks now holds 20 High Street Shops in Britain along with half a dozen in America and shops in France. Marks now holds shareholdings amounting £40m this has enabled him to open shops for his girlfriend, Nicole Fahri with designs either made or chosen for herself. Along with his chain of shops Marks owns at least two factories in Britain, one in South Sheilds at Commercial Road with about 160 workers and the other in London based Bow Factory at Fairfield Road with over 100 workers.

In an Interview with the Times 'Spectrum' on the 24th September 1985 Marks went on record as saying, 'I beleive in dictatorship'. With the exploitation of his workers in Britain and the use of sweat shop labour in Macau, Hong Kong, Morrocco and others encompassed with the way in which he operates there is no reason to disbeleive this statement in the slightest.

As has already been stated, French Connection is an exclusive clothing firm which has garments that retail at around £40 - £50 per item. The exploitation of Marks dreamed of Clothing empire sees his workforce at the South Sheilds, Contracts Ltd receiving a weekly wage of £76 or less. Marks refuses any type of union structure throughout his clothing shops and companies, since September 17th 1985 clothing workers at the Contracts Ltd factory have been taking strike action for recognition of a union in the works.

Below is an interview with two of the Contracts strikers, Catherine Elliot and Dot Wilkinson.

ALL OUT STRIKE ACTION HAS BEEN BREWING IN THE FACTORY FOR SOME TIME NOW, WHAT IS THE REASONS BEHIND THIS ?

ANSWER: In February ('85) a £12 bonus that we were receiving as our wages are so low, was axed and a new Piece Scheme was enforced. In the Canteen Tommy Coburn (Manager of Contracts Ltd) said that we would be able to make over £100 per week. At 3oclock on that day we held a meeting outside the factory, Coburn wouldn't let us use the works premises, as we did not want the New Piece Scheme. After the meeting had finished we tried to return to the factory but our clock on cards were missing. This was effectively the first time Coburn had locked us out. The next day Coburn told us that we either worked normally or we would all be sacked.

This threat was withdrawn when the union (National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers) and Stephen Marks met and agreed to impliment the new Scheme for a three month trial period. However non of us really wanted the scheme at all.

WHAT WAS THE NEW PIECE SCHEME ?

ANSWER: If we were to start a new Garment line we received no bonus to our wages at all. On the other hand a 'Time and Motion Man' was brought in. We had to begin to do our work while he timed us with a stop watch, he would then set a level of how many garments we could do in an hour. If you did the number of garments set you would receive a bonus, if not you got your normal wage, about £76. Even though the 'Time and Motion Man' timed us Coburn always had the last word, and he would set the number of garments to be done at an impossible level.

CATHERINE: The 'Time and motion Man' timed me on the dresses I was pressing. It worked out that I could do about twelve in an hour. The Management then came back and told me I had to do Twenty in an hour which was impossible to do.

One other case of this type of thing happened with people working on the Bukta Shirts we had got orders for. A number was given to the line by the 'Time and Motion Man' which the line found to their surprise they could meet,



CATHERINE AND DOROTHY

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ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST PAPER

EDITORIAL

In 1979 when the Tory Party won the general election many people in the labour movement were of the opinion that if Thatcher did try to impliment the radical changes in our society that her retoric was calling for then the working people of this country would not stand for it. If in 1979 we were told that within six years-the jobless would number 4.5 million -hospitals and schools would close-benifits would be cut Trade union membership a thing which working people had to fight for rather than accept as a right-we would have said that this was the ranting of a madman.Yet this is the very situation which we face today.The Tory Party along with the C.B.I.,the Institute of Directors,the Media and various right wing think tanks are organised and are orchastrating a campaign to challenge the values which we have all taken for granted.Can we wait on the side line another six years and passively watch while our society slides further towards the chaos of the so called "free market economy" in the hope that an alternative will drop out of the blue?We need to organise now. "The Syndicalist" is a very small contribution to this process of organisation.

"The Syndicalist" aims to report the experiences of working people both within their workplace and local community and provide them with support in any way we can. But in order to do this we need your financial help. As with all small papers "The Syndicalist" is produced on a shoestring, if you want to see this become a regular paper send donations to;

TYNESIDE REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISTS
c/o D.O.H.
115 WESTGATE ROAD,
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

this entitled them to bonus. The next day when the management found out he set a higher number that had to be done and sacked the 'Time and Motion Man' for not telling him the level he had set. This bonus payment has still not been paid to the workers yet. Now the workers have just decided not to bother trying to meet the levels, we would rather work at our own speed.

DURING THE TRIAL PERIOD WHAT WAS THE SITUATION LIKE IN THE FACTORY ?

ANSWER: At the begining a Disc System was brought in for anyone who needed to go to the toilet. There were two discs per section, each section had around 18 workers. We had to ask the Supervisor for a disc if we wanted to go to the toilet. If both discs were being used at the same time and you needed to go to the toilet they made you run there and back or they wouldn't let you go at all. If somebody went without the Supervisors knowledge they would go to the toilet and look for you and make you come out. Each time you went to the toilet we were allowed three minutes only, you can imagine the situation of somebody with an upset stomach.



DOT: Personally I feel that the main reason that the disc system was brought in was to stop groups of us talking together, this frightened Coburn.

In this trial period the attitude of the Supervisors changed towards us. They began to speak to us like dogs, shouting at us to stop singing and talking. One particular Supervisor went around swearing at us all the time and making disgusting racist remarks to one of the lads that worked there.

AT THIS TIME WAS THERE ANY CASES OF VICTIMISATION ?

ANSWER: I only know of one real case myself but there have probably been more.

One person kicked up a fuss over the Management plan to move her machine to another line and get somebody else to work on it.

After that the Management and the Supervisors hounded her until at the end she was left with no other alternative but to resign.

She was a qualified machinist and they put her on jobs she knew nothing about. She was not allowed to go to the toilet unless she asked the Head Supervisor first, they watched her while she worked and put her in the corner of one of the work rooms by herself and wouldn't let her speak to anyone.

IN JUNE OF THIS YEAR FRENCH CONNECTION TOOK ON BUKTA SPORTS CONTRACTS, WHAT SITUATIONS DID THIS CREATE ?

ANSWER: The company took on half a dozen lads to do the Bukta work. At Contracts your first month of employment is on a lower rate of pay to that of other workers. Well the lads the got employed found themselves sacked the next week and others taken on. Even those that did not get sacked before the month was up were not given the higher rate of pay (from £66 to £76), as this is at the Managements discretion and they said they did not work hard enough.

DOT: My son, Richard, got employed on the Bukta Sports. He started on the Tuesday and by the following Thursday he had been sacked, no reason was given for this. When he asked for a reason he was told that it was too complicated to go into and there was not time to explain. He worked from 8.00am to 6.30pm each week day and also worked on the Saturday and Sunday, this overtime is compulsory. My son is only sixteen years old and making a kid his age do that type of overtime is illegal.

YOU SAY OVERTIME IS COMPULSARY, WHAT IS THE EXACT SITUATION ?

ANSWER: They simply tell us we either work overtime or we're sacked. They say that there are plenty of people on the dole that would be willing to do our jobs.

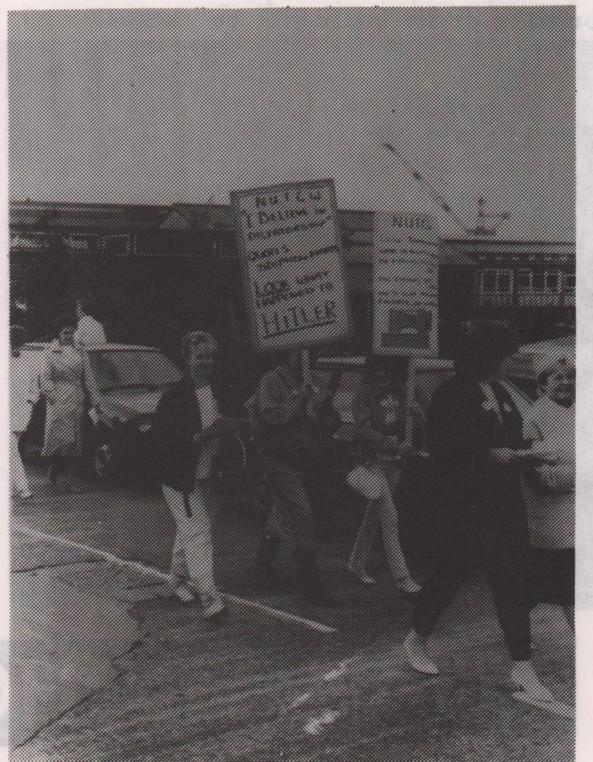
WHAT IS THE SITUATION WITH WORKERS DELEGATES IN THE FACTORY ?

ANSWER: Basically the refuse to recognise any Shop Stewards or union delegates. If we are called into the Managers Office and we ask for our Shop Steward to be present the Company refuse this. We're not even allowed to talk about unions or read or fill in union forms on the shop floor. If your caught by any of the Supervisors doing this they immediately stop you.

N.U.T.G.W.
DEMANDS
UNION RECOGNITION
AT CONTRACTS
LTD./ FRENCH
CONNECTION

CONTRACTS DISPUTE FINANCIAL APPEAL

SEVERE HARDSHIP IS NOW BEING EXPERIENCED BY THE STRIKERS. FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS VITAL - EVEN MORE SO AT THIS MOMENT AS XMAS APPROACHES. ABOUT HALF OF THE STRIKERS ARE ONE PARENT FAMILIES BRINGING CHILDREN UP ON THEIR OWN. THEY RECEIVE NOTHING FROM THE DHSS IN MOST CASES AND HAVE TO GET BY ON £16 PER WEEK STRIKE PAY AND CHILD BENEFIT. DONATIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED! DON'T LET THE KIDS STARVE AT XMAS! ALL DONATIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO:- N.U.T.G.W. CONTRACTS DISPUTE FUND, c/o N.U.S. BUILDING, CORONATION STREET, SOUTH SHEILDS, TYNE & WEAR.



One of our elected Stewards, who has now left, received some union literature through the post. The mail was opened by the Management and the contents were not given out. At one point the Company set up a Works Committee with the numbers of Management Representatives and workers delegates being heavily stacked in the favour of the bosses, anyway Coburn insists on the final say himself no matter what that committee felt.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF LABELS BEING TAKEN OUT OF CLOTHES ?

ANSWER: When the factory first opened clothes came in that had been made in 'Hong Kong'. These labels were taken out and replaced with the 'French Connection, Made in Britain' labels. This is in fact illegal and we're looking into it.

WHEN DID THE LATEST ACTION BEGIN AND HOW ?

ANSWER: As far back as May we have wanted to take all out strike action but the union held us back in favour of work to rule. On the 16th September we finally agreed with union support to hold one day token strikes each week for at least six weeks in support of union recognition. On the 17th September the first strike action was taken. This action was supported by the lads employed to do Bukta Sports work and they came out with us. The Management told all of them that they were sacked for doing so. The morning of the 18th we all went to the factory for 7.50am but the doors were locked and no-one was allowed in.

After that all those that had been sacked were offered their jobs back but a show of hands by the workers on the questions of either taking all out strike action or carrying on the token actions came out in favour of going out on all out strike action for union recognition. The following week we held a secret ballot with 144 workers taking part, no-one voted against continuing the all out strike action. This means that the strike is now official.

APART FROM THE SOUTH SHEILDS AND LONDON MANUFACTURERS, IS THERE ANYONE ELSE THAT MAKES FRENCH CONNECTION CLOTHES ?

ANSWER: The French Connection company exploits workers that work in the sweat shops of Turkey, Macau, India, Hong Kong and Morocco, they get paid bowls of rice, they are probably exploited more than we are by the French Connection Company.

WHO ACTUALLY STOCKS THE FRENCH CONNECTION CLOTHES ?

ANSWER: This is a very difficult question as we only really know the stockists in Tyneside and London. We really need information on companies in other areas that stock the French Connection goods.

IS IT IMPORTANT FOR FRENCH CONNECTION TO BE BLACKED ?

ANSWER: The victory of the strike can only be gained if actions such as blackings of retail, Transportation and manufacturing of

all French Connection goods is taken by all workers involved. This action not only needs to happen in Britain but also on an international basis. The National Union of Seamen have already agreed to black all imports and exports of French Connection goods, actions such as this must be carried out on a much broader scale. Stephen Marks must be stopped from opening anywhere else with French Connection labels during our dispute.

WHAT OTHER ACTIONS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPENING ?

ANSWER: Apart from the great need for financial support pickets are needed both on our own picket lines at the Contracts factory in South Shields and also other French Connection stockists and manufacturers round the country and abroad. There are only about 140 of us and only a certain amount can be done, we need both workers and the unemployed to picket shops that are in their area. Offers of help in this area are urgently needed.

HAS THERE BEEN ANY VIOLENCE ON THE PICKET LINE ?

ANSWER: There have been a few cases of violence towards the pickets. Management and scabs have attacked a few pickets and on one occasion one of the factory Managers drove into the legs of one picket with his car.

WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR ?

ANSWER: Money wise we've had a good response especially from the miners, clothing workers, our own union and others, and of course through street collections though more is needed. We've had support on our picket lines though again more is still needed.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WANT TO ADD ?

ANSWER: This strike must not be lost. If it is employers will have a free hand to come into this area, or any other and take the working conditions in the clothing industry back thirty years.

As has been stated in the interview support on the South Shields picket line is needed both from the unemployed and other workers. Information is desperately needed on companies that stock French Connection goods round the country, offers of picketting of these shops will be gratefully received by the strikers, so lets have them offers coming in now along with the information needed. All workers involved in any way with



French Connection goods must black them immediately. Since the interview was taken their strike hut has been burned down by scabs and the police on the picket line are being given cups of tea and sandwiches by the company.

SOLIDARITY IS NEEDED FOR THE STRIKE TO BE WON. LET US NOT LET THE CONTRACT STRIKERS FIGHT ALONE, GIVE THEM YOUR SUPPORT.

The strikers can be contacted at;
Contracts Strikers,
c/o National Union of Seamen Building,
Coronation Street,
South Shields,
Tyne & Wear.

The strike headquarters is manned from 9am until 4.30pm each week day.
Telephone: 561308/9.

CONTRACTS DISPUTE BLACKLIST

NEWCASTLE.

Eldon Square:

Mothercare.

Bainbridges.

Top Man.

Detroit.

Wallis.

House of Frazer (Binns).

Middlesborough.

Hartlepool.

Darlington.

Sunderland.

South Shields.

Newcastle.

Others:

Lewis. Northumberland St.

Fenwicks.

Catalogue 1. Clayton St.

LONDON.

Harrods.

Cane Boutique.

Connections. Big Ladies Boutique.

Connections For Men.

Nicole Fahri Shops.

French Connection Bow Factory (manufacturers) Fairfield Rd, London.

MAKE THE STRIKE SUPPORT GROUPS PERMANENT

SUPPORT THE SHIPYARD WORKERS

Throughout all of September and the beginning of October Shipyard workers from the four Swan Hunter yards, a part of British Shipbuilders, on the Tyne took industrial action over Management's decision to implement new work practices without any consultation with the workforce. The aspirations of the workers were seen through firstly complete occupation of all four Swan Hunter yards (Hebburn, Walker, Neptune and Wallsend, the fight also included the care and maintenance of Hebburn dock) and then all out strike action. For months the Swan Hunter Management had attempted to force the workers into a position where they had no alternative but to take strike action. The plan of British Shipbuilders, and of course the government, was to make the yards as 'un-economically viable' as possible to lay the grounds for the Swan Hunters future privatisation. The Management tactics included the ripping up of both local and national agreements and the victimisation of the workforce. The only real weapon that the shipyard workers had in reply to these Management tactics was that of an occupation of all four Swan Hunter yards. All out occupations of all yards was decided upon by the whole workforce after a mass assembly at the City Hall in Newcastle. This occupation had the effect of taking the ball out of the Management court and putting the workforce in the position of holding the trump cards. After only one week of occupation the Shop Stewards committee, who had affectively taken complete control of the action, called off the occupation. Even when the point was made that the occupation could not be abandoned unless by a mass assembly in the same way as the decision for

the occupation had been taken the reply of the Stewards was that they had made a decision and it was final. Their excuse for the abandonment of the only real weapon the workers had was that they feared arrest and resultant court action coupled with a naive belief in a management offer of negotiations if the occupation was called off. These talks of course did not come about.

From this point on all out strike action was taken and finally after 7 weeks the strike was called off after both sides met at A.C.A.S. and a deal for the resumption of work was agreed upon.

At present in the Swan Hunter yards there is a scene of utter confusion, nobody seems to know what is going on. The agreement that was drawn up at A.C.A.S. has affectively been ignored by the Management on the grounds that the union has a different interpretation of the agreement to their own.

The run down of the British Shipbuilding Industry is a continuous process and almost all yards throughout the country are feeling the affects of Tory plans to privatise British Shipbuilders. As in the case of the Swan Hunter yards at the beginning of the year with the loss of over 2,000 jobs Scotland are now facing the same tactics and are threatened with hefty redundancies.

The question of privatisation is a major one in both Shipbuilders and docks throughout the country, already docks in Rosyth and Devonport are being hit by strike action by their 14,000 workforce against the Government plans for privatisation. On Tyneside the workers at the Swan Hunter yards are preparing for future action over privatisation which will result in the loss of hundreds more jobs and an erosion of their rights that they have won over the years.

British Shipbuilding Management on the Tyne have been told to be out of the Yards by April 26th next year. Meanwhile the Swan Hunter workforce are holding a £1 per week per man le-

vy to relieve the severe hardship that will be felt during future strike action.

Lessons learnt during the September, October must be heeded well, the occupation being the only weapon, the rank and file must take complete control of any future action, power must not be allowed to slip into the hands of incompetent cowards on the Stewards committee as happened during the last action.

Support groups on the scale of those formed during the Miners '84, '85 dispute must begin to be formed now in preparation for the future action. All those involved in the last dispute must continue their support groups and the unemployed groups throughout Tyneside must begin to discuss action that they can take when the fight against privatisation comes about.

WHAT'S GOING ON

This November a branch meeting of the Newcastle National Union of Teachers was informed that 160 jobs were to be axed. The reason for these losses being the government's rate-capping of Newcastle City Council.

It is still not clear how these cuts are to be implemented. However it is obvious that are children alone will be the ones to suffer.

The minister for education, Sir Keith Joseph, likes to portray himself as a member of a caring Conservative government. Yet whilst they are more than happy to hand out massive tax cuts to their wealthy friends, (who can easily afford to send their children to expensive private schools), they are quite prepared to lower the standards of education for working class kids.

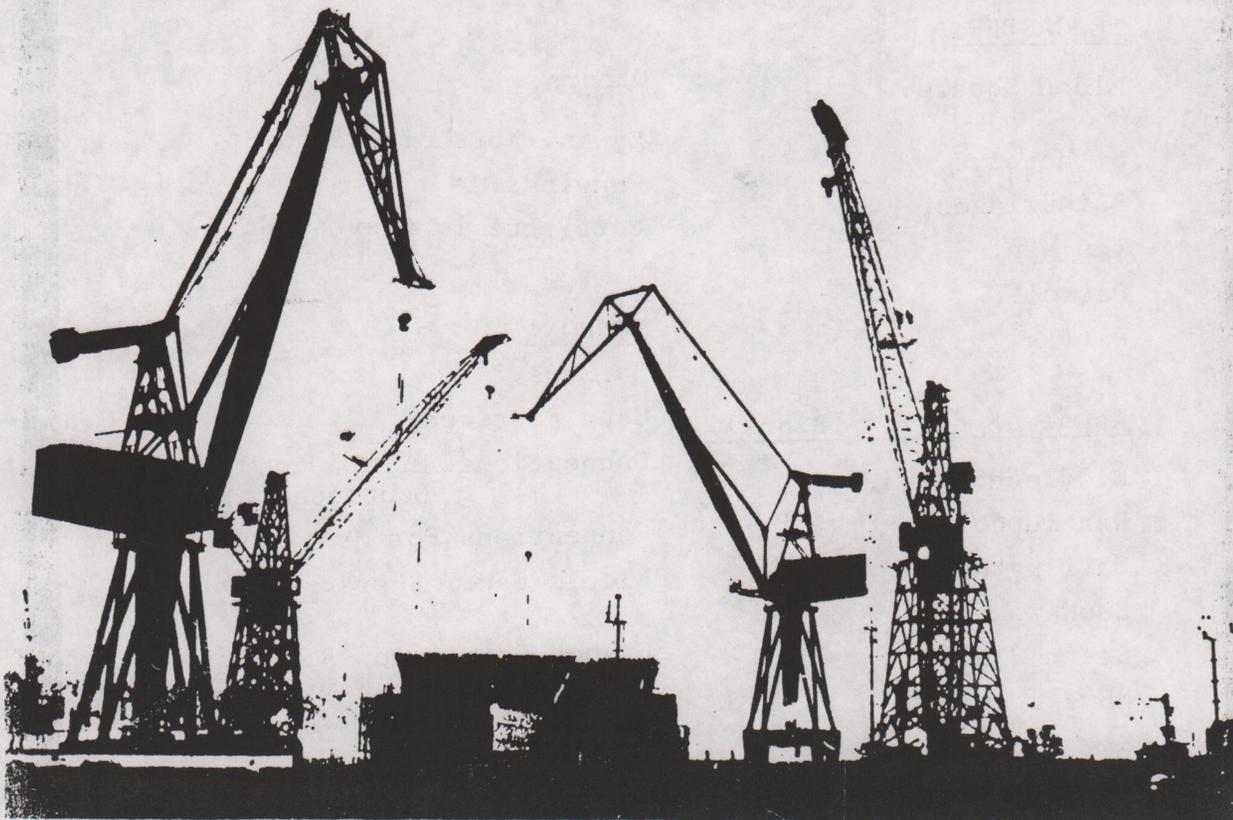
The teachers struggle for a decent wage must be supported as part of the fightback against the destruction of our children's education.

* * *

The National Front is again trying its best to get its loonie ideas on our library shelves. One librarian on Tyneside was threatened with a total walk out by library staff after he complied with a request by an N.F. member who wanted the library to stock National Front propaganda in the reference section.

The librarian was conned by the National Front member into putting N.F. 'literature' on file for a three month probationary period - a system whereby literature is put in the library but is not on display to the public - if the public request this literature during the trial period then the time could be extended.

This is an obvious ploy by the Nazis to try to gain credibility in the eyes of the general public by having its papers stocked in the libraries of the Northeast. Fortunately the library workers threaten to walk out if this N.F. propaganda was not "placed in the bin where it belonged".



IGNORED BY B.R.

At the moment the Thatcher Government are examining new sweeping powers covering the Safety of British Rail Trains and particularly the role played by the drivers themselves.

David Mitchell, Transport Minister, has already hinted at the contents of the new powers which he says will include the blood, urine or breath testing of all drivers whose sobriety is in question. Apart from being a grave insult to all train drivers the insinuation that train drivers are to blame for all train crashes is absolutely ludicrous.

Indepth studies of crashes over the years both in the country and others prove without doubt that the causes of accidents are the imence pressures that drivers are put under while working. If the safety of passengers and drivers themselves is to be put first above any profit margins, extreme changes must be implimented in British Rail.

The recent head on collision of two trains was met with British Rail officials putting the blame squarely on the shoulders of the drivers themselves. The accusations made of drivers not bothering to take any notice of warning signals is a farce beyond belief. Who in their right minds would do such a thing when they know for a fact that the warning light is on as something is coming the other way.

The recent defeat felt by the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen in their fight against one man operated trains was not only a defeat for the unions and its members but was also a major setback in the safety of our trains. The pressure that drivers are put under during these working conditions is extremely great and accidents become more of a likelihood.

The question of flexible rostering is also a major problem, made worse through one man operated trains. Studies made some time ago in France, Germany, Holland and Sweden on the question of flexible rostering proved that the likelihood of accidents taking place and more illnesses of drivers was greatly increased by this way of working and yet this evidence has been completely ignored by British Rail.

France: Sleep deprivation.

French Electric train drivers, who had worked flexible rosters for many years, became worried in the late 60's about safety (especially dozing off while at the controls) difficulties and social relationships and body exhaustion and premature retirement. As a result the sleep of train drivers was studied to measure the affects of the irregular schedules they worked. It was found that the drivers did not recover from the sleep deprivation they suffered as a result of irregular working. The later they went to bed after midnight the less they slept. There was a strong relationship between sleep loss and not remaining vigilant, especially at four to five am. The drivers did not make up their sleep loss because their body could not adapt to the changing work patterns.

West Germany: Vigilance and accidents.

In 1974 researchers made a study of 1,000 different train drivers working on locomotives, ten in number, for a total of 6304 hours. The object of the

research was to examine the relationship between fatigue, rest periods and their influence on performance efficiency of train drivers, ie the likelihood of accidents.

They recorded how often the warning hooter sounded. It was sounded when the driver did not respond to a warning light. Thus the number of times the hooter went off each hour was a measure of a drop in vigilance by the driver. The research found minimum vigilance, the highest error frequency, at 0300 and 1500 hours. The effect was strongest when the accumulated fatigue was highest; the earlier the shifts started the greater was the error frequency in the afternoon. The length of the rest period preceding the shift influences the error frequency. Drivers were least vigilant after 10-16 hours break and best after 24 hours rest.

Holland: flexibility, fatigue and stomach complaints.

In 1979 fatigue, stomach complaints and sleep deprivation in Dutch train drivers was looked at. The study found that the most fatiguing shifts were those starting before 0600 while the least fatiguing were those starting between 0800-1000. This is in line with other research in Germany and Sweden.

A comparison was made between shifts and between two different workplaces;

- * Night shift workers suffered from two and three times the incidence of stomach complaints than did other shiftworkers.

- * The Central Station drivers working the most flexible system suffered 50% higher rates of stomach complaints as did the freight drivers (shunters) who worked the least flexible.

Central Station drivers had twice the incidence of stomach complaints on evening shifts as did freight drivers, and

almost twice the incidence on early shift. Night shifts were similar, once again bearing out the results on many other studies.

Stomach complaints may develop into more serious stress related problems like stomach ulcers. They can also be a warning sign of other stress diseases such as heart disease.

Sweden: irregular hours are unhealthy

In 1980 a nationwide study of the working environment of bus, tram and suburban train drivers was carried out. In comparing the effects of different shift patterns, it was concluded;

- * Schedules involving alternating hours (consecutive and mixed) lead to more insomnia and stomach disorders than permanent schedules;

- * Those assigned on a day basis were absent more often through tiredness and dread of going to work, than permanently assigned workers;

- * Those on rolling free-time schedules have considered leaving their jobs more often than those on permanent schedules;

- * Those on consecutive and mixed schedules find their hours of work more disruptive of family relationships than those permanently assigned;

- * Those daily assigned consider to a greater extent than do permanently assigned workers that their hours of work disrupted their marriages;

- * Morning and afternoon shifts were the most fatiguing while those with high work loads were worst of all.

All of this information and of course much more has been affectively ignored by British rail. The facts show that the dangers in trains are down to the way in which the workforce are organised and no matter how many times British Rail, or any government minister tries to blame dangers on the drivers themselves they shall have a major problem as injuries, deaths and crashes rise.

TANFIELD LEA

Rag Trade workers in Tanfeild Lea, Near Stanley, who are owed holiday pay and wages in lieu of Redundancy payments were awarded around £20,000 to be divided amongst all workers, at a Newcastle Industrial Tribunal on November 5th. The amount awarded is equal to thirty days wages for each of the 45 workers who were sacked from Quartiz Ltd earlier this month when the factory closed its doors and the company ceased to trade.

FACTORY GOODS AUCTIONED

The 31st October seen an attempt to hold a secret auction in the trading primes of the Quartiz Ltd Company, Epworth Chapel. The auction was made up of lots totalling 100 machines and numerous other equipment from Quartiz Ltd and another local clothing firm, Tab Court Ltd, which had also recently closed its doors to the workers. This secret affair was halted as pickets were mounted from both clothing firms who had joined together to expose the underhanded wheeling and dealing of the companies involved. As press arrived to cover the story Goff Burnard a Whitley Bay Chartered Accountant resorted to violence in an attempt to stop the story of the factory closures and Auction a closely held secret.

WHO IS GOFF BURNARD ?

Burnard has been a Director of at least seven companies involved in the clothing industry in the Consett and Stanley area.

Three of the aforementioned companies have operated from the Epworth Chapel successively since 1981. The first of these companies, Fab Fashions, closed with debts of over £250,000 and was soon followed by the closure of both Fair Fashions and Quartiz Ltd. Infact these three companies have all closed their doors to the workforces within 21 months of each other.

Only months before the closures of Tab Court and Quartiz Ltd Burnard resigned from the Board of Directors of both companies.

EPWORTH CHAPEL RE-OPENED

A new company under the name of Curtis Court is set to re-open the Epworth Chapel works. This company holds the Chapel freehold and is its listed Registered offices. It comes as no real surprise to learn that among the Board of Directors is Goff Burnard himself though his style of be rich quick business at the expence of the workfprces does not seem to be paying off this time. The company is at present attempting to recruit staff though the people of Stanley and Consett seemed to have learned their lessons well and have so far refused to go near the place.

PIERS MERCHANT



NAZI LINK

Newcastle Central's M.P. Piers Merchant again faces embarrassing questions about his past links with the overt Nazi organisation 'The National Democratic Party'. It was back in the 1983 General Election that 'Searchlight' the anti-fascist monthly blew the cover on a number

of Torys with either connections with or past membership of the loonie right. At that time allegations that Merchant had been election agent for the N.D.P. in 1971 at Nottingham were hotly denied by both Merchant and the Tory Party. Luckily for Merchant the limelight of publicity switched to another of Mrs Thatchers supporters Thomas Finnegan - Tory candidate in Stockton. Finnegan was exposed as not just as a former member of the N.F. but that he had once stood as an N.F. candidate. The press homed in on Finnegan's past and Merchant was left to project the new clean cut young Tory image. This time a document from the N.D.P. has fallen into the hands of 'Searchlight', extracts of which are printed in the November issue. This document gives a list of past "active members" and "officials" and cites Mr P. Merchant as having lived at 13 Larch Cres. Beeston. Nottingham. Mr P. Merchant M.P. has again denied this and has even suggested that the document is a forgery. Robin Pannal, who was N.D.P. vice-chairman at the time has conferred that "Piers Merchant" was indeed an "active member".

HOUSING BENEFIT CON!

Norman Fowler - the Secretary of State for Social Services has much been talked about because of his plans of making drastic cuts in the whole Social Security System in the near future. However, cuts are happening now and have happened since he announced that teams were being set up to review the system in April 1984.

Cuts like the pensioners Special Heating Allowance which was reduced by £1 per week and also their annual benefit uprating day was delayed, leaving pensioners to either get deeper into debt or freeze in the winter causing many more deaths from Hypothermia. Also the Clothing Grant was drastically cut - almost abolished and just recently the Central Heating Allowance has been abolished.

There are thousands of individual cases where people have had their benefits cut but nobody ever hears or finds out about it. Cases that are never publicised like the recent change in the Housing Benefit System. The change affects all the people who pay their rent every calendar month (30-31 days) and who receive calendar monthly rent payments from the Housing Benefit Office. What is to happen now

is that they will receive a rent cheque for four weeks (28 days) because according to a Newcastle Housing Benefit Officer "Due to a new computer system we are unable to pay benefit on calendar monthly frequency". This means that the people affected will lose 2-3 days worth of rent each calendar month and the outstanding amount will have to be paid out of their own pockets. It is said that they will be re-imbursed at the end of the year with a thirteenth cheque, however, this has failed to happen in some cases. For example, if a person paid £68 rent per calendar month, they would receive a cheque from the H.B.O. for £62.76 for four weeks which would mean that they would have to pay £5.24 themselves every month until the end of the year when they are supposedly re-imbursed.

All of these attacks and more have taken place in the past year and if that isn't bad enough Norman Fowler and his review teams are about to make massive cuts in the Social Security system where Housing benefit, Pensions, Child benefit, Supplementary benefit, Disabled benefit, Heating Allowances and Young peoples benefit will be either slashed

or abolished.

WHERE WE STAND

1. We believe in independent, horizontal working class organisation independent of all political parties and bureaucratic trade union structures, none of which represent the true interests of the majority of people, i.e. the people who create the wealth by manual or intellectual means.
2. We believe that under the present system of capitalism support should be given to the struggle for short term gains, such as better pay and conditions but these should always be seen for what they are, limited interim reforms which are no substitute for the total reorganisation of society necessary to ensure true freedom, equality and democracy.
3. We believe that the parliamentary system does not serve the interests of the working class. The solution to the problems that we the working class, face do not lie in the election of a new leadership, but in the creation of new structures both in the workplace and the community which allows for us all to have total control over the decisions which affect our lives.
4. As revolutionary syndicalists we believe that only by a general strike accompanied by mass occupations and the implementation of workers control, can capitalism be finally be removed and a free self managed society where production and labour is geared towards need and not profit be created.
5. We are opposed to all forms of racism, fascism, nationalism sexism indeed any ideology which sets out to divide the working class.

or abolished.

WE MUST FIGHT AGAINST THE EVER INCREASING ATTACKS ON THE UNEMPLOYED AND LOW PAID WORKERS !

Mr Wonderfuls

SILENTNIGHT'MARE'

500 workers have been on strike at the Silentnight bedding firm at Sutton and Barnoldwick, North Yorkshire, since June 11th, 1985.

Following the redundancy of 88 workers in December 1984, the company announced early in 1985 that they could not afford to pay the nationally agreed wage rise for the bedding industry, and requested members of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (F.T.A.T.) to forego the rise for four months, in return for a guarantee of no more redundancies.

8 weeks after making this agreement a further 52 redundancies were declared. As the guarantee had been broken, the workers asked for their wage rise, but were refused, they then

took industrial action in support of their demand. Management responded by sacking all 500 strikers.

At present they are still in dispute and claiming unemployment benefit (though so far they have received none). 6 strikers have taken the bosses to a tribunal for unfair dismissal as test cases.

The management are now recruiting temps to break the strike and are having some success largely because of the areas high unemployment. 90 have gone in to the Sutton plant alone. They are bussed in with police at both ends of the convoy.

Two TGWU members have also crossed picket lines contrary to union instructions and have had their cards ripped up.

The main problem comes from the owner drivers who number 43 and can keep the plant supplied and transport beds out. Several thousand pounds

damage has been done to these lorries in sabotage. So far there have been 7 arrests outside the Sutton plant mostly for public order type offences.

The strike has been going on for over five months now. These workers are standing firm to defend their jobs and the recognised negotiating machinery for the bedding industry. they need your urgent support both moral and financial and would remind you that the head of this factory was referred to by Mrs. Thatcher on a recent visit to the company as "MR. WONDERFULL".

Donations made payable to:
SUTTON SILENTNIGHT WOMENS SUPPORT GROUP,

c/o Mrs. PAT McCORMACK,
NORTHSTEAD,
NORTH ROAD,
SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN,
Nr. KEIGHLEY BD20 7PQ.