

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTION

- Action
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- New threats

PRICE 30p

(Bulk Rates — see back page)

AN ANTI-PRIVATISATION NEWSLETTER FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

No 1 MARCH 1983



North Paddington Community Darkroom

Basingstoke RESISTANCE

A Campaign Against Privatisation, Resistance '83, is being organised in Basingstoke. Initiated by the Trades Council, it includes public sector unions, local Labour Party delegates and representatives from the Labour Groups on Basingstoke Council and Hampshire County Council. They plan to draw in tenants' groups and other local campaigns for a large public meeting in April. Last year the Trades Council and the Southern Area WEA ran six evening educationals on privatisation which drew together workers in Telecoms, the Post Office, local government and the NHS.

The District Health Authority have expressed opposition to the contracting out of NHS ancillary services. However the same authority recently sold an old hospital site in Basing Road to Marples Ridgeway to construct a new private hospital.

The privatisation of the refuse service was at least temporarily blocked last year. The Trades Council and Labour Party leafleted the workforce which led to a demonstration which included refuse vehicles encircling the town hall. Further details from Carla Jamison, Basingstoke Trades Council, 75 Freemantle Close, Basingstoke, Hants (tel. 0256-57038).



ATTACK ON NHS

'The privatisation of NHS services is ideological — it is not to save money. Contractors will end up ripping-off the health service just like the drug companies' said Paul Noone, consultant at London's Royal Free Hospital. He continued 'The government wants to destroy the power base of the health service unions by bringing in non-unionised labour or workers represented by a wide variety of unions. This would make it more difficult to organise and unite around wage claims and against government policies. We could even see lump labour in hospitals just as we have on building sites.'

Two recently issued draft Circulars from the DHSS call on health authorities to privatise as much as possible of Central Sterile Supply Departments which manufacture products for the NHS. The other Circular calls for contracting out of domestic, cleaning, catering and linen services and 'to develop the use of commercial operators for the whole range of support services'. Meanwhile the expansion of private hospitals continues. Government 'think tank' proposals to abolish the NHS continue to be developed despite Thatcher's denials.

'High standards of infection control and coordination of routines are essential in hospitals. Bringing in outside contractors is bound to lead to lower standards and disruption in wards' said consultant Paul Noone.

In Sheffield the Health Authority's experience with contractors suggests that significant costs are incurred in supervising the standard of the contract. Whilst initial tender prices may cut costs there is a subsequent tendency for prices to rise dramatically or for standards to drop. The domestic services contract at St. Stephens Hospital, London, was ended by the Health Authority due to poor standards of supervision and management. The St Albans City Hospital also terminated a domestic services management committee contract owing to poor quality work. Another Hertfordshire Hospital, Lister, terminated a laundry contract and found it was cheaper to use the NHS laundry. In a similar move Paddington and North Kensington Health Authority saved £100,000 per annum.

Blackpool BOYCOTT SUCCEEDS

The switching of the TGWU annual conference from Blackpool to the Isle of Man had a major influence in stopping the privatisation of Blackpool's refuse and street cleansing. An hoteliers' organisation opposed privatisation arguing that a loss of trade union conferences would mean £9 million lost income over five years. Two one-day strikes were held, the second of which included a stoppage of buses and trams. 66,000 'Blackpool Bugle' newsletters were delivered to households which led to a lot of supporting letters in the local press.

Joint union and management discussions produced £312,000 savings. This included a transfer to plastic bags. There was no 'task and finish' so no changes could be made to the hours worked. However between 30 and 40 jobs will be lost by natural wastage although there are already 19 unfilled vacancies. The council gave a commitment to retain direct labour for five years.

The Tory Party conference is in Blackpool this year and the local leadership feel they have to welcome Thatcher with something privatised. Car parks are next in line. However they already make a £100,000 surplus each year. Shopkeepers are opposing the plan because they are afraid that, once privatised, firms will hold Sunday markets in the car parks. Twenty-two permanent plus seasonal jobs are threatened. Privatisation of deck chairs and the zoo are still being discussed.

Further information: *Refuse and street cleaning:* Bill Campbell, NUPE, 108 Deepdale Rd, Preston, Lancs (tel. 0772-21003). *Car Parks:* Alf Davis, TGWU, 44 Cookson Street, Blackpool (tel. 0253-22140).

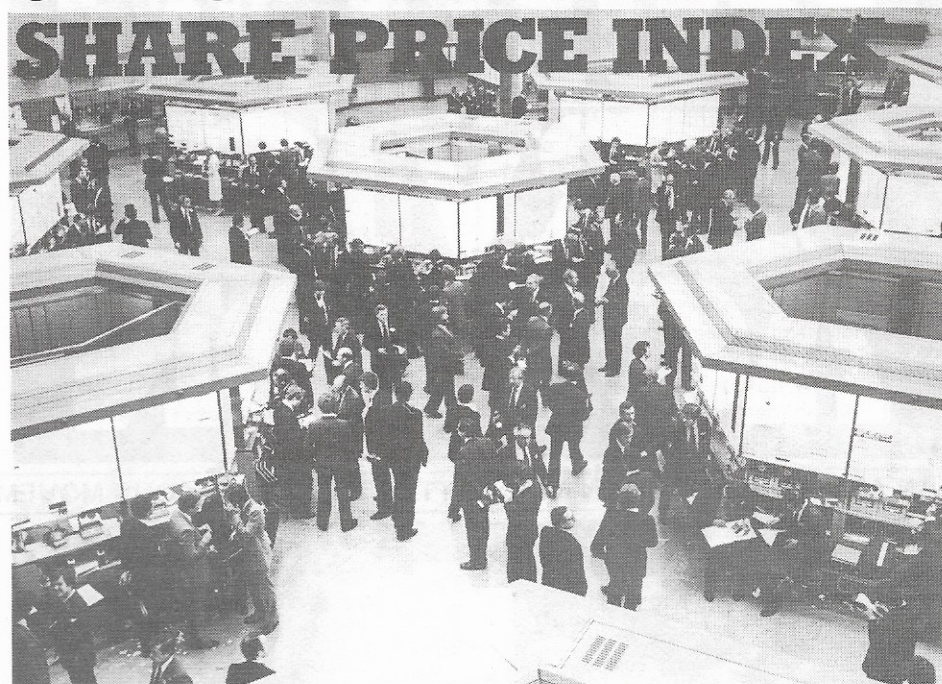
Civil Service FOR SALE

Over one third of the arbitrary 1984 Civil Service staff cut target of 100,000 will be achieved through privatisation. Beyond 1984 another 60,000 jobs will go in cleaning, catering, typing, transport and other services.

The Council of Civil Service Unions (CSU) has compiled a document identifying job losses in various departments and establishments as a result of hiving-off work to the private sector.

It shows that the quality of services has suffered together with increased delays and fraud. The CSU is leaf-letting the membership to build up a more effective response to privatisation. Copies of the dossier and leaflet from CSU, 40 Broadway, London SE1 (tel. 01-222 1437).

SPECULATORS



Philip Wolmuth

	Sale price of share	Price at end of first day	Highest price 1982/83	Price now
British Aerospace	150p	171p	263p	208p
Cable and Wireless	168p	197p	405p	380p
Amersham International	142p	188p	291p	255p
Britoil	100p	81p	84p	45p
Associated British Ports	112p	138p		

To come:

British Telecom

British Airways

British Shipbuilders

PRIVATE STEEL 'Government plans for dramatic privatisation of BSC's Sheffield engineering steel mills (with sales of £400m a year) are already well advanced' claimed The Economist, March 5th 1982. The Tories' plans for British Steel go further than the Sheffield privatisation. They are also seeking links between the bulk steel-making parts of BSC and French and American steelmakers using private company subsidiaries.

PRITCHARDS IN BATH Pritchards Industrial Services take over refuse collection, street cleaning and toilets in Bath on 1st May. The council is claiming to save £1.5 million over the five year contract. There will be no May Day celebrations for the 93 council workers who lose their jobs. Pritchards will recruit only 52 workers.

MOBILE GARDENING SERVICE Wandsworth Council have given Pritchards another contract, they already do street cleaning. This time it is for mobile gardening e.g. grass cutting. Pritchards' bid was 26% lower than Initial Cleaning Services — neither firm has any real experience in the field. Pritchards will have only 9 permanent staff and will rely heavily on casual labour.

MEALS ON WHEELS Gloucestershire Social Services Committee are investigating the possibility of handing over the service to a private contractor. They have also just increased charges from 65p to 75p.

LIVERPOOL The Liberal-controlled city council has agreed in principle to the privatisation of refuse collection and is currently preparing tender documents. Contact Joint Shop Stewards Committee, Chairperson Bill Jones, 20 Alwyn Street, Liverpool L17 (tel. 051-727 5202).

BRITISH RAIL WORKSHOPS The campaign against the closure of the Horwich, Bolton engineering works continues where 1100 redundancies are threatened. Shildon, Co. Durham and Temple Mills, London also face closure. An increasing number of BR wagons are privately built and owned as part of a deliberate privatisation policy. There is an 8 page supplement on the Horwich campaign, Serpell and other BR privatisation in the March/April issue, No 61, of Community Action magazine (50p from 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.) Further details from Horwich Loco Works Joint Action Committee, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Bolton, Lancs.

Cambridge SCHOOL CLEANERS STRIKE

School cleaners and caretakers in Cambridgeshire recently organised a mass lobby of the county council meeting which decided to seek tenders for school cleaning. Pat Southern, South Cambridgeshire NUPE branch secretary said 'There is no doubt that the county councillors have a strong political will to privatise. They don't just want to save money.' Over 150 people attended the lobby.

The first one day strike on March 2nd involved cleaners and caretakers leafletting the public explaining their case. The strike was particularly successful in Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon. Schools and colleges in rural areas are heavily used outside of school hours. These users have rallied round to support the cleaners.

Manor Comprehensive School in Cambridge was originally to be closed for the strike after a 15-2 vote by the school governors. However the education department told the Head to keep it open. Pickets on the gate including Labour councillor Janet Jones, chairperson of the school governors, heard one of the dissenting Tory county councillor and school governor also present on the picket to urge kids into school, refer to the cleaners as 'those scum'. 200 kids refused to enter the school. Another one day strike was held on March 9th. The strategy to fight privatisation had been worked out earlier in February at a three day educational for shop stewards.

Sheffield MONITORING BEGINS

Sheffield Joint Works Group, consisting of shop stewards from the Works Department, tenants representatives and councillors, are starting to monitor the work of private building contractors on council contracts. Council workers and tenants are encouraged to check the quality of work, method of working and health and safety standards adopted by contractors. A pamphlet is being widely distributed which suggests what to look out for and who to contact if council standing orders on trade union recognition, apprentice training, sub-contractors, and wages are not implemented.

'In future we will be more vigilant in checking that standing orders are implemented. We intend to fight tooth and nail to preserve the Works Department' said Ray Glaves, TGWU and Works convenor. Copies of the pamphlet from Corporate Plan Unit, Town Hall, Sheffield S1.

JOB LOSS TABLE

Authority	Service	Contractor	Original No. of Jobs	Jobs now	Jobs lost
Wandsworth	Street cleaning	Pritchards	100	63	37
Wandsworth	Refuse	Grandmet	216	133	83
Wandsworth	Mobile gardening	Pritchards	36	9 +	16
casuals					
Southend	Refuse/str cleaning	Exclusive	297	213	84
Merton	Refuse/str cleaning	Taskmaster	176	95	81
Tandridge	Refuse	Exclusive	58	37	21
Wirral	Refuse/str cleaning	Waste management	456	254	202
Bath	Refuse/str cleaning	Pritchards	93	52	41
Kensington & Chelsea	Refuse	Grandmet	40	34	6
Taunton Deane	Refuse	Waste management	43	22	21



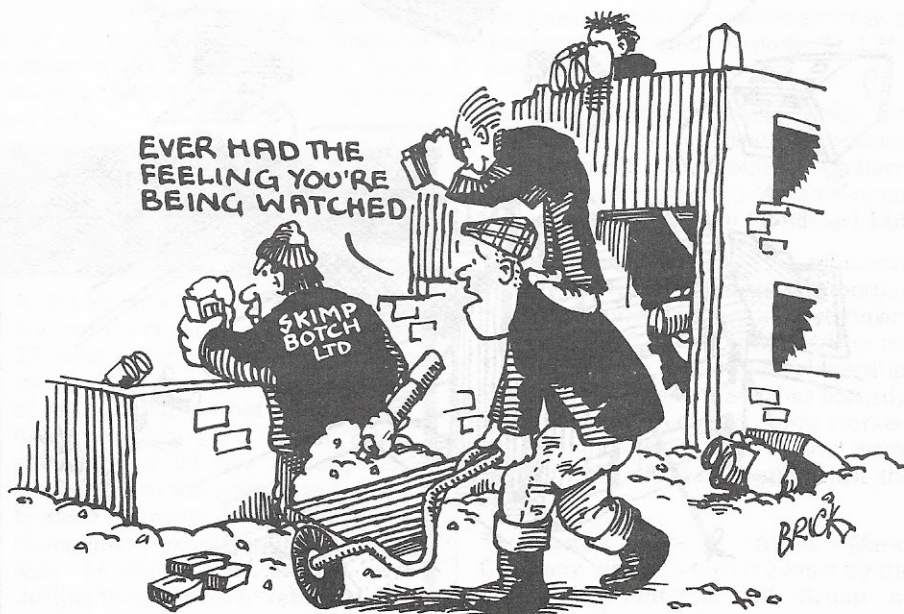
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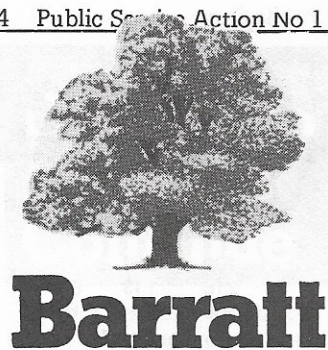
SERTUC

The first of a series of county-based conferences on the threat of privatisation in local government will be held on April 16th at the Queens Hotel, Brighton. It is open to all local authority stewards and representatives in Sussex. The conferences are organised by the recently formed local government committee of the South East Region of the TUC. A leaflet detailing the scale and effects of privatisation is also being produced. Details from Jim Cornelius, NUPE, 13-15 Stockwell Road, London SW9 (tel. 01-737 2011).

Wirral

A joint meeting of trade unions in Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council decided to take no action following the council's decision to privatise refuse, street cleaning and toilets. 456 redundancy notices are being issued and Waste Management Ltd will take on about 250 workers although no council workers are guaranteed jobs. The council is now looking at the possibility of privatising school meals, school cleaning and grass cutting. Further information from NALGO, 107 Telegraph Road, Heswall, Merseyside (tel. 051-342 6111).





Contractors & Consultants

HIGH FLYERS

BUYING UP

COUNCIL HOUSING

Barratt Developments, now Britain's largest housebuilder, is cashing in on the privatisation of council housing. They have set up four new companies, Barratt Urban Renewal Ltd based in Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham and London. Barratt's activities in Glasgow and Knowsley are reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

In Liverpool, Barratts bought the 344 dwelling Myrtle Garden estate and adjacent land from the council for a mere £250,000. They also received a derelict land grant. Refurbished flats (renamed Minster Court) are now being sold for between £12,000-£18,000. Barratts are scouring other areas for similar deals. Last year they tried to buy the 530 Basford flat complex in Nottingham on the cheap. They wanted the land, not the flats and under the proposed deal the council would have had to pay for demolition.

Barratts have also been given government approval to build housing for rent under the assured tenancies scheme. They will get large capital allowances.

Barratt has had a meteoric rise. In the late 1960s it was confined to house-building in the North East. It now operates throughout Britain and in California. Turnover in 1982 was £386m with pre-tax profits of £40m. 93% of income comes from building and selling houses, the remainder from

general contracting and property investment. Barratt sold 14,000 houses in 1982, 13% of the UK market. Sales this year are expected to reach nearly 20,000. It operates through 40 semi-autonomous companies eg. Barratt Leeds Ltd, Barratt Southampton Ltd. Each company is treated as a separate profit centre. In 1980 Barratts acquired the American National Housing Corporation and McKeon Construction to get a foothold in California. They now operate from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento and three other cities.

The founder and chairperson is Sir Laurie Barratt. His salary last year was £127,401. It has doubled in two years. He owns 1.1 million shares in the company currently worth £6m. In April 1982 he bought Farndale Estate in the heart of the North Yorkshire moors for £1½m. The estate includes 56 farms and cottages and 1200 acres of prime shooting land. He assured worried tenants that it was a private purchase and that he intended to retain the estate as a whole and solely

for his own use. Barratt thinks that there is enough council housing. 'We should do what they do in Singapore. When council tenants' incomes reach a certain level they should be out. Then there would not be two Jags outside the house' he claimed in a *Guardian* interview last year.

77 per cent increase

Six other directors earn between £90,000 and £110,000 as a result of a 77% average pay increase last year. Other Barratt workers got 6%. The UCATT London Region are currently doing a survey of Barratt's use of lump labour.

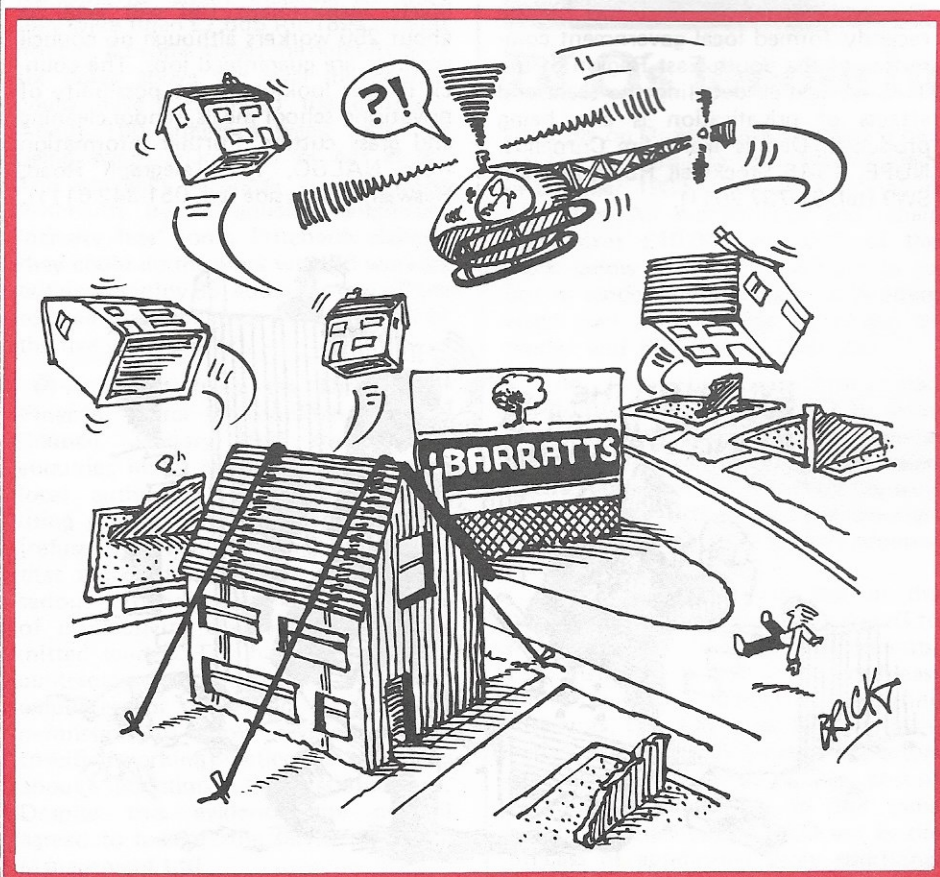
Sir Laurie Barratt's aims are 'to provide a complete solution to the housing problem from cradle to grave'. He believes that the level of home ownership in Britain is 'a national disgrace' and wants to see it reach 80% with the company claiming a quarter of the market. Seventy per cent of sales are geared to first time buyers. Barratt's are apparently concerned with their down market image — but their homes in Hampstead, London are for sale at a mere £550,000.

'Barrattizing'

Yet in both Britain and America, Barratt is building increasingly smaller homes. 'We've got to do an 80% house. You give people 80% of the space, 80% of the lifestyle, 80% of the goodies — but at a price they can afford', claimed the then president of Barratt American Inc, Dale Stuard in an interview in the *Los Angeles Times* in June 1981. He went on 'Barrattizing meant getting used to the idea of the hard sell versus the soft sell, stressing not what the buyer wants but what he needs and can afford'.

Barratt's answer in Britain is Studio Solo, a furnished bedsit. Christina Rowe bought one in Milton Keynes for £12,750 in 1981. In a long *Daily Mail* article earlier this year, she explained that standing in the middle of the bedsit, her outstretched hands nearly touch both walls. 'If I had to spend five nights a week and the whole weekend here it would drive me mad. It's just too claustrophobic'.

Barratt are also building and selling sheltered housing for the elderly completing a 1000 units this year. A housing association takes over the freehold after



Contractors & Consultants

Shareholders in Barratt Developments

Some of the major shareholders in Barratt Developments PLC, December 1982, with total number of shares.

British Airways Pension Fund	325,000
BUPA Investments	90,000
Cambridge Health Authority	8,800
Cedar Investment Trust	204,687
Central Regional Council	100,000
Commercial Union Assurance	862,500
Cooperative Pension Funds Unit Trust	325,000
Cornwall County Council	100,000
Croydon Council	100,000
Esso Pension Trust	75,000
Greater London Council	650,000
Hampshire County Council	120,558
Huntingdon Health Authority	5,000
ITC Pension Trust	1,005,940
Kings College Hospital Medical School	12,500
Labour Party Nominees Ltd	14,970
Legal General Assurance	387,500
Leprosy Mission Corporation	16,250
Liverpool Council of Social Service	6,400
Local Authorities Mutual Investment Trust	150,000
Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund	400,000
NACRO	6,500
Northumberland County Council	70,000
Norwich Union Insurance	3,110,924
Official Custodian for Charities	366,902
Pearl Assurance	241,697
Phoenix Assurance	37,890
Port Employers & Dock Workers Pension Fund	125,000
Post Office Pension Fund	1,123,905
Press Association	7,000
Prudential Assurance	674,282
Reed Pension Trust	105,000
Shepherd Group Pension Trust	15,000
South Yorkshire County Council Pension Fund	1,136,750
Standard Life Assurance	2,200,377
Thomas Tilling Pension Trust	110,000
Thorn/EMI Pension Trust	125,000
Tyne and Wear County Council	150,000
University of Leeds	38,000
University of Nottingham	34,257
West Midlands County Council	230,000
West Yorkshire County Council	78,000
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	4,000

the sale, so Barratt 'takes the profits and says farewell to the inevitable niggles' explained the *Sunday Times* Business News recently.

Residents on Barratt estates in the north east haven't been so lucky. Faulty installed gas heaters caused the death of one person and led to several hundred new heating systems being installed. Barratt's used colliery shale, previously banned by the National House Building Agency, to infill an estate. Floors lifted and walls bowed outwards. A residents campaign produced some remedial work.



Philip Wolmuth

CITY Connections

What do the British Rail Pension Fund, British Aerospace, Town and City Properties and British Steel Corporation Pension Fund have in common? They are all audited by accountants and consultants Peat Marwick and Mitchell.

Cazenove & Company were stock-brokers for the sale of shares in Amer-sham International, British Aerospace and Britoil. They are also brokers for Cable and Wireless and Barratt Developments.

Price Waterhouse, auditors and consultants, are gaining substantial contracts to investigate the 'efficiency' of public services and to carry out 'reorganisation' studies. It is interesting to note that their business clients include Barclays Bank, Land Securities, Britain's biggest property company, Courtaulds, Building Societies Association, Shell, Coalite Group, which owns most of the Falklands Islands, Esso, Lloyds Bank, Unilever and a host of other multinational companies in Britain, America, South America, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong and India.

Toiling with Contractors

A Marathon a day five days a week. No, not the chocolate bar but walking 27 miles a day at an average walking speed of 8.71 mph loading 5½ tonnes of refuse. That is what Grand Metropolitan expected 60 Wirral refuse collectors to do day in, day out, every week of the year. They lost the tender. However, winners Waste Management expect 110 workers to walk 17 miles a day at 3.67 mph shifting three tonnes of refuse.

WHO OWNS?

Sutcliffe Catering Group Ltd and John Sutcliffe and Company Ltd, currently seeking school meals and NHS cleaning and catering contracts, are subsidiaries of Town & City Properties PLC. They own property valued at £390m including Arndale shopping centres, Earls Court and Olympia Exhibition Centres. Hambros Bank and Prudential Corporation own 10.5% and 5.7% of the shares respectively. Town and City has reported losses since the collapse of the property boom in 1974. However Sutcliffe Catering, itself made up of a number of subsidiaries, made £1.8m profit on £60.3m turnover in 1981.

Crothall & Company Ltd, Cleaners Ltd, General Cleaning Contractors Ltd, Acme Services (PSG) Ltd, and United Linen Services Ltd are all owned by Pritchard Services Group. These companies, together with other subsidiaries like Pritchard Industrial Services, are competing for public sector cleaning, refuse, catering, security and hospital services.

Biffa Ltd, Advance Services, Initial PLC, Grayston Plant Ltd, United Transport Company are BET Group (British Electric Traction) companies. They also own Rediffusion and the Argus Press as well as substantial shareholdings in Thames Television and Capital Radio. Turnover in 1982 was £1,030 million with £67m pre-tax profits.

Grandmet Catering Services, Grandmet Services for Hospitals and Grandmet Waste Services, together with Watney Mann and Truman Breweries, Berni Inns, Mecca, Express Dairy and Peter Dominic Ltd are subsidiaries of Grand Metropolitan Ltd, the £3,850 million turnover multinational hotels, catering, brewing, food and leisure concern. Pre-tax profits in 1982 reached £220 million. Grandmet International Services has started industrial catering operations in Mexico, Columbia and Venezuela as part of a wider strategy of developing catering markets in Latin America.

Exclusive Cleaning Group, which has refuse and/or street cleaning contracts in Southend, Eastbourne, Chiltern, Tandridge, Bromley and Milton Keynes, is owned by Brengreen (Holdings) Ltd.

Waste Management Ltd is a subsidiary of the National Freight Corporation which was privatised by the government last year. NFC is the crown jewel in the Tories' plans to widen share ownership, Barclays and three other banks backed a buy-out by the managers. Some workers and ex-employees also bought shares despite a TGWU campaign against the sale.

Taskmasters are an Alfred Marks Company which in turn is owned by the ADIA S.A. International Group of Companies based in Switzerland.

Contractors Failures Continue

● Taskmasters' contract with the London Borough of Sutton for a 'deep sweep', an annual eight week blitz clean of the streets, started late last year. By the end of the eight only one street in seven had been finished — and Taskmasters had to double the workforce to achieve that. There are no financial penalty clauses in the contract. 'There is no doubt they underestimated the amount of work and did not employ sufficient men', said borough engineer Mike Hampson.

● Exclusive cleaners took over refuse and street cleaning in Eastbourne in April 1982. They were unable to complete the rounds with their proposed workforce. They started with five rounds each with a driver and four loaders. By June they had six rounds, four with a driver and five loaders, two with a driver and six. This represented a 50% increase in the workforce. At one stage Exclusive had to bring in refuse vehicles from Southend to work in Eastbourne in the evenings. The council had to increase its own inspection staff by 50% who had to work overtime at weekends. A report from the Director of Technical Services concluded that 'a much tighter performance is required in all aspects of the services provided'.

● In the first six months of Pritchard's Wandsworth street cleaning contract they were fined £7,665 for 1894 default notices. At some stages the defaults were six times above the level the council could have terminated the contract. About 190 streets a week were not being swept adequately or not at all. The council's response was to assist Pritchards by introducing temporary 'penalty free' zones. Pritchards claimed they could do the work with 63 workers but now employ 85, adding an extra £½m to their wages bill over the remainder of the five year contract.

● A report from the Director of Finance, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council, January 1983 states 'from enquiries made, we are informed that local authorities who are currently using private contractors on this work (refuse and street cleaning) have found that the contractors have encountered serious difficulties in achieving levels of productivity claimed in their submitted tenders. This has resulted in the contractors either engaging additional employees or requesting the Council's permission to allow revision of the specified working practices, thus bringing about a reduction in the level of service'. Despite this evidence the council agreed to hive-off the service to Waste Management Ltd.

Contractors & Consultants PAYING MORE

Privatisation is a political attack. It isn't simply about cutting wages, benefits and working conditions and weakening the trade union movement. There are many examples where privatisation costs more.

The Department of Transport closed the Road Construction Units and transferred the design of motorways and trunk roads to consultants. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee, House of Commons discovered that the transfer of work cost £5 million in redundancy compensation and special payments to the consultants. Since it was more expensive to use consultants there would be a continuing extra cost, £4 million in 1981-82.

The Birmingham Dental Hospital recently renewed a cleaning contract with Interior and Structural Cleaners

Ltd. Last year it cost £50,000 — this year £45,000, so clearly the health authority were paying over the odds. Direct Labour proposals were costed at £35,000. The contractors are paying their workers only 88% of the appropriate Health Service Whitley Council rates for cleaning. Nor does the contract incorporate penalty clauses for bad performance. There are no cash limits on the three year contract which can be renegotiated annually with increased costs passed onto the authority.

Private auditors have been brought into 14 health authorities eg. Cooper and Lybrand in Ealing, Ernst and Whinney in Cornwall. A letter from the DHSS to the trade unions in November 1982 confessed that 'the tenders received were significantly more expensive than the costs of carrying out the work using civil service staff'.



Philip Wolmuth

DLO's tendering costs

Controls on Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) are going to be tightened again in October 1983 — the third change in 2½ years. All maintenance and repair work over £10,000 and 60% of the work below this limit will have to go out to tender. Similarly all new building work over £50,000 has to go out to tender and 60% below this limit.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities' (AMA) response to these new proposals argues that the original competition arrangements increased DLOs' costs by 7%. The new controls will 'lead to further upheaval amongst authorities and an even greater administrative burden and cost'.

'Some authorities are still in the process of employing additional staff to manage the October 1982 requirements. For instance, in one large north-east authority four additional measuring surveyors, two additional building technicians and two maintenance inspectors have been employed at an extra cost of £50,000. Furthermore, in the same authority, the housing DLO are in the process of appointing three additional

estimator/surveyors and one additional technician at a cost in the region of £35,000, making an additional annual cost of £85,000. Similarly, one London borough with a large building maintenance DLO estimates that if the new requirements are introduced then, to ensure proper preparation of documents for competition and exact supervision of work of the DLO, fifteen additional technical officers will be required. This would involve an additional expense of up to £120,000 per annum.

The AMA report the results of a Department of Transport survey of additional tendering and supervision costs. It showed that 'the estimated additional costs of tender procedures and contract administration for all highway tendering procedures under the Act, inclusive of the current proposals, comes to £14m for the 68 out of 85 authorities who completed the questionnaire. The cost of the current proposals came to £7.5m. Total additional staff required since the Act comes to an estimated 1,104'.

HOUSING

21 WAYS TO PRIVATISE

The Tories now have at least 20 different schemes and policies to privatise council housing. Over 200,000 local government jobs in housing management, building repair and architects departments are at stake. These schemes not only involve selling public assets at knockdown prices — discounts on council house sales alone since 1979 total over £2000 million — but handing over management and repairs to contractors. Others involve exploiting temporary MSC schemes at the expense of local government workers. Many involve tenants or owners bearing much higher costs as well as rent and mortgages.

The schemes and policies include:

- Selling vacant difficult-to-let dwellings, streets or blocks to builders for improvement and sale to individual purchasers at market values. Stoke on Trent and Calderdale councils have sold council flats to private landlords, including one Jersey-based firm.

- Whole estates are up for sale. Labour controlled Knowsley Council is involved in a deal with Barratts, Barclays Bank and Abbey National Building Society. Parts of the 3,312 Cantril Farm estate, renamed Stockbridge Village, will be demolished and new private housing built. Nine tower blocks will be sold off. Liverpool and Glasgow have also sold off entire estates.

- Under the Homesteading scheme rundown houses are sold for improvements by the purchaser at up to 30% discounts — improvement grants, loans and mortgages are also freely available.

- Council, New Town and certain housing association tenants have the right to buy at up to 50% discounts. Shortly to be extended to tenants of charitable housing associations.

- Local authorities sold 2500 acres of housing land in the first three years of Tory rule. Councils have been forced to set up land registers to dispose of other land.

- Vacant council dwellings are sold at up to 30% discounts for first-time buyers, job movers and the homeless.

- Some councils, New Towns and housing associations run shared ownership schemes which allow tenants to pay part rent and part mortgage. A new Do-It-Yourself shared ownership scheme allows tenants to select their own properties anywhere in Britain and to obtain a shared ownership deal from a locally designated housing association who will purchase the property.

- Improvement for Sale schemes allow councils, New Towns and housing associations to use improvement grants (£6500 in London, £4875 elsewhere) on dwellings which are unfit, lack basic amenities or are in disrepair and then sell them.

- Instead of improving council estates some councils eg. Glasgow and Bolton, are giving tenants grants, who then get the work done by contractors. 'Tenants are free to top up with their own money.'

- Tory 'Think Tank' plans to privatise

most council housing leaked to press in December 1982. Would involve converting rents into mortgages.

- New controls on local authority Direct Labour Organisations introduced in Local Government, Land and Planning Act 1980 since tightened twice to try to force more construction, improvement, repair and maintenance work to private contractors.

- Some local authorities eg. Wandsworth, Liverpool and Birmingham considering privatising housing management. Some housing associations also considering it.

- Community Refurbishing Scheme and Safe Neighbourhood Unit projects exploit MSC schemes to catch up on the repairs backlog and carry out environmental improvements at the expense of local government jobs.

- Architects departments are being closed eg. Kensington and Chelsea or rundown and work transferred to private architects.

- Council tenants are to be given a 'right to repair' under the new Housing Bill. They will be able to do the work themselves or get contractors to do it and will be repaid up to 75% of the cost the councils own Direct Labour Organisation would have charged. Havering, London is already operating this scheme.

- The Tories have switched resources to housing associations, the publicly unaccountable third arm of housing. The level of council housebuilding has dropped to 1920s levels.

- Some councils eg. Colchester are using estate agents to administer the sale of council houses.

- Caretaking services and grass cutting on estates are under threat from contractors.

- Bromley, Portsmouth and Camden councils have employed local solicitors firms to defend legal action on repairs brought by tenants.

- Insurance companies, private builders and property companies are being encouraged to expand private landlordism. Under the assured tenancies scheme companies can build for rent at market prices and receive massive capital allowances.

- Builders are seeking Urban Development Grants and Derelict Land Grants to help finance council housing privatisation schemes and boost profits.

Philip Wolmuth



Glasgow

STOP THE SALE CAMPAIGN

Tenants' groups, trades unions and Labour Party members are actively campaigning in Glasgow to stop Barratts buying 759 damp-ridden flats at Hutchieson E in the Gorbals.

Tenants have campaigned for years to get rid of damp only to find the ruling Labour Group plans to sell them off to private developers. The council has already sold over 200 acres to developers since 1977 and a further 28 sites are up for grabs.

The council's Chief Surveyor is even quoted as saying 'there is considerable potential in the possibility of disposing of part of the city's parks for housing'.

Last autumn a 'Stop the Sale' campaign was launched. Countless letters, leaflets and public meetings have attracted a lot of publicity. Privatisation is now opposed by many local tenants' and community groups, Labour Party branches and Constituency Parties, DLO shop stewards' committee, NALGO and TGWU District Committees. Only nine councillors have so far expressed opposition, whilst the Tories unsurprisingly support the move.

The campaign is calling on NALGO to black any paperwork connected with the sale. They know that this could be the first of many such deals since Barratts (Urban Renewal) Scotland Ltd is looking for 1,000 council houses a year to purchase and believes West Scotland offers 'massive scope'.

Contact: William McClean c/o Laurieston Information Centre, Block 80, Stirling-fault Place, Glasgow G5. 041-429 3254.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTION

Information

PRIVATISATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES, free from GMBATU, Thorne House, Ruxley Ridge, Claygate, Esher, Surrey KT10 (Tel Esher 62081). Explains some of the dangers of privatisation and the impact on jobs and working conditions. Has a useful chart comparing local authority and several contractors rates of pay, pensions, sickness benefits and holidays.

DIRECT LABOUR ORGANISATIONS: How to resist private contractors. Free from GMBATU (address above). Describes the new controls on DLOs and what the laws mean in practice. Includes a round-up of recent events in nine DLOs and examples of conditions to be imposed on contractors.

IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICES: SHUT OUT CONTRACTORS. £2.00 from London Division of NUPE, 13 Stockwell Road, London SW9 (Tel 01-737 2011). A 50-page education and information pack produced in conjunction with Services to Community Action and Tenants (SCAT) divided into six sections covering what is privatisation, how and why the Tories are pushing privatisation, why public service is so important, what privatisation means for jobs, services and users, who is behind the attack on the public service, and strategies to fight privatisation. Includes information on how to investigate companies. The section on action, almost half of the pack, details a seven-point strategy including direct action, workers and users links, education and propaganda and industrial action.

KEEP YOUR SERVICES PUBLIC. £1.00 from NUPE, Civic House, 20 Grand Depot Road, London SE18 (Tel 01-854 2244). A slightly shorter version of the above pack but with additional material including two pamphlets arguing the case against contractors and a section on health for sale.

BRITISH TELECOM PRIVATISATION. Evidence presented to the Department of Industry. Free from Post Office Engineering Union, 150 Brunswick Road, London W5 (Tel 01-998 2981). Argues the case against privatisation showing the detrimental effects on UK manufacturers, suppliers and users.

PRIVATE LINE: The Future of British Telecom. £1.20 Counter Information Services, 9 Poland Street, London W1 (Tel 01-439 3764). Detailed examination of the impact of selling-off British Telecom for workers and users.

Bury NEW THREAT

Having won a reprieve with the threat of an all out refuse and street cleaning strike in March 1982, Bury Council has now rescinded an agreement not to proceed with tendering. The unions referred the matter to the Whitley Provincial Council which ruled against the council. Further negotiations between unions and the council produced a 22 December agreement. A Working Party of councillors and union delegates produced two alternative savings schemes one of which involved using a wheeled bin system currently undergoing trials in the area.

However the council ignored both the ruling and the working party proposals and called for tenders. Early in March a one day strike, called at two days notice, drew a 90% response from both NALGO and manual unions in all departments. Tenders are now in with Waste Management as hot favourites since they had previously done a £16,000 study of the refuse service. They will in effect be tendering on their own contract document since their earlier work included drawing up a specification for the contract.

Further action is planned. A joint union committee set up last year issued leaflets to households. NALGO produced a series of Action Bulletins for their members. Further details from Ian Stephenson, NALGO.



Neil Martinson

WASTE DISPOSAL IN BIRMINGHAM: Briefing No 1 (45p inc post) and **SOCIAL WORKERS STRIKE BRIEFING** (50p inc post) from Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Frederick Street, Birmingham B1 (Tel 021-236 8323). Two sets of newspaper cuttings and information on the recent tendering of refuse collection, eventually retained by Direct Labour but with the loss of 263 jobs, and the social workers strike over an investigation by consultants Price Waterhouse.

THE GREAT SALES ROBBERY: The sale of council housing. 55p inc post from SCAT Publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (Tel 01-253 3627). Examines the effects of the Tories' sales policy detailing evidence to show that sales mean longer waiting lists, higher rents, increasing public spending, creation of council ghettos, less mobility and choice, and fewer jobs. Also has sections arguing why council housing is important, developing alternatives to sales and six pages of organising and action.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE: The case against privatisation. 70p from Labour Research Department, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 (Tel 01-928 3649). Looks at the effects of selling off North Sea oil and British Telecom, contracting out refuse collection and cleaning, and the expansion of private medicine.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTION needs:

- campaign news reports from trade unions, shop stewards committees, trades councils, tenants' groups and other organisations;
 - information about contractors' failures, lost contracts etc;
 - copies of authorities' reports discussing and comparing tenders and any trade union submissions;
 - details of contractors' wages, conditions and benefits;
 - copies of any campaign leaflets and publicity material.
- Please write or phone SCAT Publications — details below.

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