

# PUBLIC SERVICE ACTION

**Action**  
**Organising**  
**Information**  
**Contractors**  
**New threats**

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AN ANTI-PRIVATISATION NEWSLETTER FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT No 11 NOV 1984



'I HAVE THIS NASTY PREMONITION OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH PHONE BILLS OF AN ASTRONOMICAL KIND!!!'

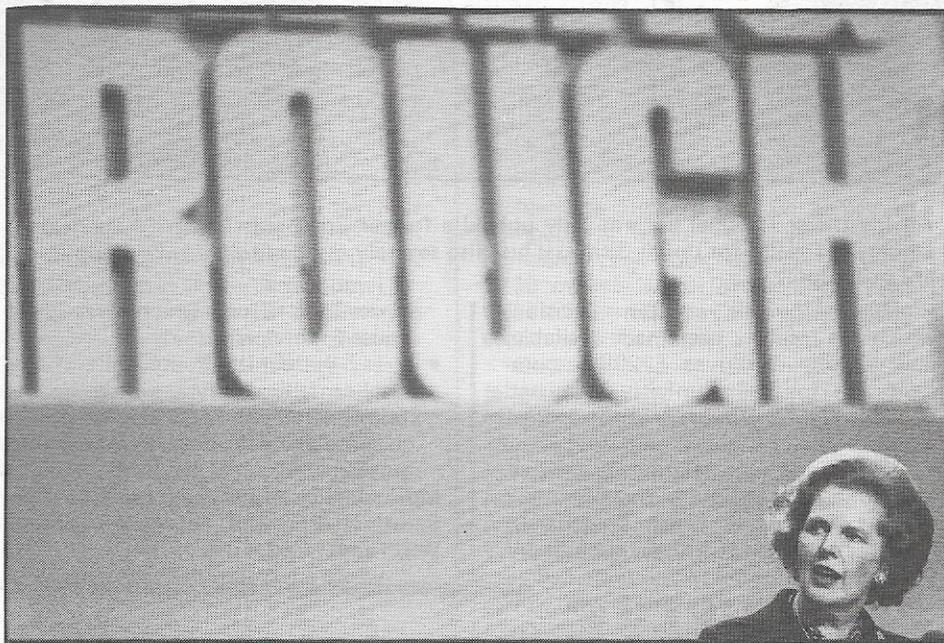
## BT IT'S NOT FOR YOU!

'It's for you' says the £7 million BT propaganda campaign, aimed at encouraging 'small investors' to buy shares when the £3.5 billion share flotation takes place this month. The myth of the share-owning democracy has been cracked by recent news that giant high-tech companies Racal, GEC and possibly STC, are expected to apply for big holdings, although Government rules initially limit individual stakes to a maximum 10% each, later rising to 15%.

City analysts are also advising that small investors can maximise their return, at 35% tax free — if they sell their shares after only 8 months! An investor who buys £500 of stock on flotation day has to pay only £200 down and no more until June 1985, when a further £150 is due. In July s/he receives two vouchers worth £36 which can be used towards payment of telephone bills, and in August should receive a dividend of £17. If the shares are sold, however,

## MESSAGE FROM BRIGHTON

Philip Wolmuth



just before the first dividend payment, when the share price has risen in anticipation of the dividend pay-out, income tax liability on the dividend would be avoided, and a return of 35% could be expected on the £350 outlay.

Thus the familiar pattern of rapid concentration of shareholdings in institutional hands is inevitable. The POEU's advice to its members and all trade unionists is, of course, not to buy shares.

### MAKING THE FUTURE WORK

The POEU has published a broad strategy discussion document 'Making The Future Work'. Aimed at dealing with the 'real, immediate and massive threats' to members' jobs and document covers new technology, competit-

ion, privatisation and re-organisation. Calling for renationalisation of BT without compensation the immediate programme includes: a claim for a 32 hour, four day week; the establishment of a Labour Party Study Group on renationalisation; the winning of the ballot on the political fund (required by recent legislation) and a broad based consultation with consumer and interest groups on the future structure of the communications industry.

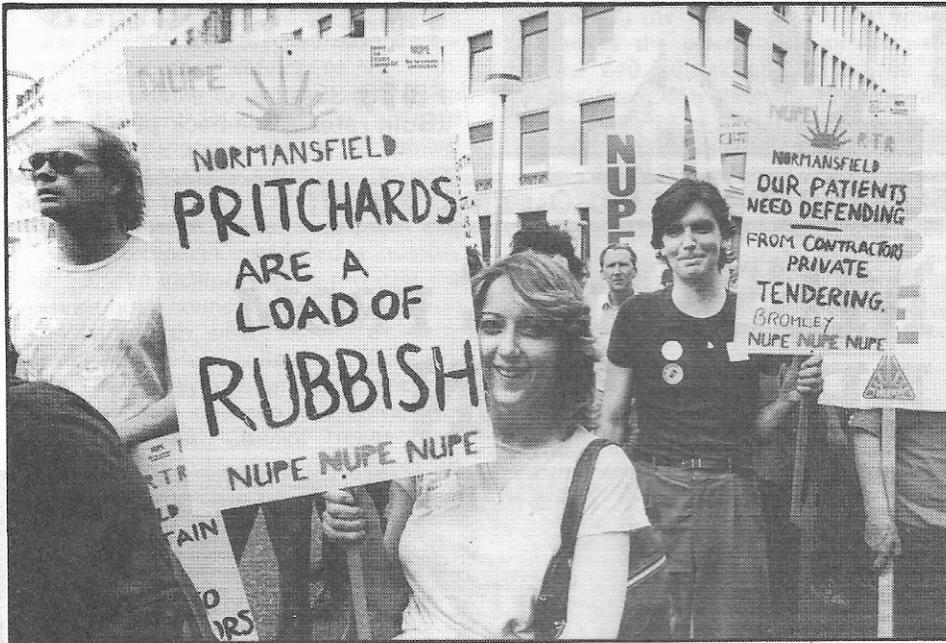
The programme of action and the POEU's position on renationalisation without compensation will be debated at Conference this month. Copies of the document from POEU Press Office. Tel: 01-998 2981.

# CONTRACTORS Fines & Failures

## Rubbish

Philip Wolmuth

Pritchards' staff turnover on the Wandsworth street sweeping contract has reached 1000 in just two years — and that's for 85 to 100 jobs! Could pay, conditions and work-rates have something to do with it?



An Industrial Tribunal has not only upheld a former Pritchards Industrial Services employee's claim for unfair dismissal but also severely criticised the firm's disciplinary procedures.

The Tribunal's written decision, which has recently been made available, awarded the employee £2208 in compensation for being unfairly dismissed and referred to Pritchards in the following terms:

- 'The procedures relating to written warnings are curious in the extreme.'
- 'The manner in which (Pritchards) chose to deal with their disciplinary

procedures is one which gives grave cause for concern.'

- '... the denial of the right of the applicant to be represented by his union (NUPE) would appear to be a fundamental breach of natural justice...'

More details about the case from Ian Scott, NUPE, 273 The Vale, London W3. Tel: 01-743 4566.

## EXCLUSIVE

Exclusive Cleansing Ltd is in more trouble over its street cleansing contract with Ealing Council. Exclusive have still failed to clean properly (see PSA 9) but the Council are bending over backwards to help. Although some money has been withheld from Exclusive, the Council recently agreed extra payments on top of the original tender price. A further £4840 for 'loss of production due to unforeseen accumulations of litter at commencement of contract' and 'loss of production due to non-availability of vehicles' has been paid.

Now the Council have agreed to provide an extra 3000 litter bins at an initial cost of £15,000 a year thereafter. Meanwhile Ealing's Street Cleansing Sub-Committee have placed on

record 'their thanks to the Chief Engineer's Division for the courteous and efficient manner in which they have dealt with the complaints that have arisen in the operation of the street cleansing contract.'

An Ealing resident has told PSA that Exclusive workers are seen regularly working after midnight around the Northfields area. On one occasion a Sainsbury's trolley was being used as a dustcart!



Four former Exclusive Cleansing dustmen have won £22,000 compensation for unfair dismissal over an alleged theft while working on the Eastbourne contract.

## Meals Merton

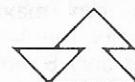
After five months of an appalling service, NUPE have called for Merton Council to end Sutcliffe's contract to provide meals for the borough's elderly. The firm's failure has attracted national media coverage and a DHSS investigation. The Council has refused to publish the DHSS' findings but are propping up the firm by spending a further £15,000 on its own food containers and yet more money on supplying items such as custard and gravy.

The service is still deteriorating and people requiring special diets are particularly suffering. Generally meals are monotonous, uninteresting and of poor quality. NUPE say that 'the political interests of the Council are being put before the health and welfare of the old people in the Borough' and that 'they are reluctant to accept Sutcliffe's failure'. More details from Ian Scott, NUPE, 273 The Vale, Acton, London W3. Tel: 01-743 4566.

• Meanwhile, Merton Councillor Robin Barratt, Chair of the Social Services Committee and responsible for the privatisation decision, has resigned. He says 'it is due to pressure of work' (he's a barrister) but Labour Cllr. Alec Leaver is 'convinced it has much more to do with the meals fiasco...'

## Ealing

The first week of Commercial Catering Group's contract to supply school meals in Ealing proved a disaster. The *Ealing Gazette's* office was 'flooded' with complaints about the service. On the first day, eight schools received their meals too late to use them and had to put back their dinner hour. One nursery school received no meals at all, and a school for handicapped children was not sent the special diet they needed. Children were reported as having drinks still frozen, empty meat pies, and just one fish finger with a little vegetable as their main course. In some schools the meals staff resigned in protest at the quality of food, lack of uniforms, and health risks caused by too few staff to clean up. Kitchen conditions were described by staff as 'appalling'. The company's general manager in Ealing, John Foden, dismissed the problems as 'teething troubles'.



Dustmen working for Grand Metropolitan's Wastecare Ltd on Wandsworth's refuse collection contract have won a £7 a week pay rise. Although NUPE are pleased with the increase they point out that Wastecare's pay and conditions are still far worse than local authority rates.

# Dirt

Philip Wolmuth



## Dudley

When the Tories controlled Dudley Council they privatised school and college cleaning and sacked 700 direct labour staff. Five companies **Exclusive, Taskmasters, OCS, Initial** and **Strettons** were brought in. Since then the standard of cleaning has been consistently bad. Complaints have been lodged by education chiefs, teachers and parents.

The Tories lost control of the Council in May. Then, in response to numerous complaints about conditions, a study of the cleaning at the six schools was carried out. The report condemns the contractors and concludes: '... A combination of inadequate labour input, combined with poor quality labour in some instances, inadequate supervision, standards, working methods, timekeeping and lack of cleaning materials... are responsible for the poor standards.'

### CONTRACTORS NOT SACKED YET

The Labour Council have not yet sacked the contractors who have even managed to negotiate a further 12% increase on the original tender prices. The Council has also paid over money originally withheld from the contractors for inadequate performance. NUPE Area Officer Geoff Poxon is concerned that the service be reverted to direct labour as soon as possible. He told PSA that there would be no problem in making up a workforce very quickly as many of the original staff would come back. It is now just a question of a political decision being made.

# INITIAL LAUNDRY

Initial's laundry contract with the North West Surrey DHA started in March: it is turning out to be a disaster. Richard Wright, NUPE Branch Secretary at NW Surrey Hospital's Group told PSA: 'The state of some of the laundry is positively disgusting. Just today, Initial delivered three bags of sub-standard laundry. We expected problems at the beginning but they've had seven months to sort things out. The standard is not improving.'

Initial's catalogue of failure includes:

- Sheets are in constant short supply. Patients have to sleep between blankets.
- Pillow cases are in constant short supply.
- Pillow cases are not being cleaned properly.
- Many white sheets have been discoloured because of inadequate rinsing.
- Towels are in constant short supply and patients have to bring their own towels in with them.
- New candlewick bedspreads are being ruined.
- An increased amount of 'disposables' is being used to make up for linen shortages. Supplies of disposables are running out.
- The increased use of disposables is adding to the cost of contracting out.
- All laundry that Initial returns now

has to be carefully checked by NHS staff. This creates extra work on top of existing duties. Overtime payments add to the cost of contracting out.

- Repairs to linen are on the increase because new linen is being damaged at the laundry.
- Delivery times are not being kept to. When the contract started, there were two deliveries per day. Now there is only one.
- Irregular deliveries mean that staff have to be kept waiting and are therefore on duty longer hours.
- Initial's delivery lorries are causing damage to NHS property eg., broken steps.

Despite raising these issues with management, NUPE are being kept in the dark as to whether any action has been taken against Initial for failure to manage the contract.

# Wandsworth NEW THREATS



Wandsworth have privatised the management of the borough's public toilets. **Initial Cleansing Services Ltd** have won a 5 year contract worth £276,299, beating competition from **Pall Mall Cleansing Services Ltd**, **Reckitt Cleaning Services** and 11 other companies. The GMBATU campaigned against privatisation, calling for the service to be kept in-house and improved to honour staffing agreements and maintain standards. The Council however, ignored a petition from over five thousand members of the public supporting the union's case, dismissing them as 'Labour hacks'.



Wandsworth are also inviting tenders for the provision of catering and cleaning services to the borough's old peoples' homes. One hundred council workers'

jobs could be lost if the council privatise.

A Campaign Committee of council unions and Wandsworth Pensioners Group has been organising mass leafletting, petitions, public meetings and lobbies of councillors. The GMBATU and NUPE are refusing to negotiate with the council or take part in the tendering process. At a recent council meeting, Labour councillors proposed that the council should at least consult with the relatives of those residents who would be affected by privatisation: the Tories refused.

**Sutcliffe's** (Merton fiasco) are known to be interested in the catering contract. Wandsworth makes its final decision on 9th January so in the meantime the campaign continues. Contact the Campaign Committee c/o NALGO Office, Municipal Buildings, Wandsworth, London, SW18. Tel: 01-870 2420.

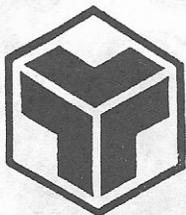
# HAWLEY CLEANING UP

Michael Ashcroft's multinational Hawley Group (see PSA 4) is a perfect example of how the laundry and cleaning industry is restructuring (and back-biting). The aim is to wipe out potential competition for the pot of gold that privatisation offers. The Hawley Group is after that pot of gold both abroad and in the UK.

In the last three years, Hawley has bought up over 30 smaller UK cleaning companies through its subsidiary, Provincial Cleaning Services Ltd. Companies such as Three Counties Cleaning, London Crystal, Cleanall (Leeds) Services, Boundary Cleaning Services, Gravesend Window Cleaning Co. and Progressive Cleaning Services will all soon be brought together to form one large company under the Provincial banner. Provincial's turnover has leaped from a mere £955,827 in 1980 to an estimated £28 million by the end of 1984.

Ashcroft, much criticised in City circles for his business methods, is also after the bigger companies operating in the UK and abroad. In May, Alfred Marks Cleaning Services Ltd was bought for £2.02 million. In September, the company's name was formally changed to Taskmasters: it has a bad reputation for contract failures in Sutton and Merton's streets and Dudley's schools.

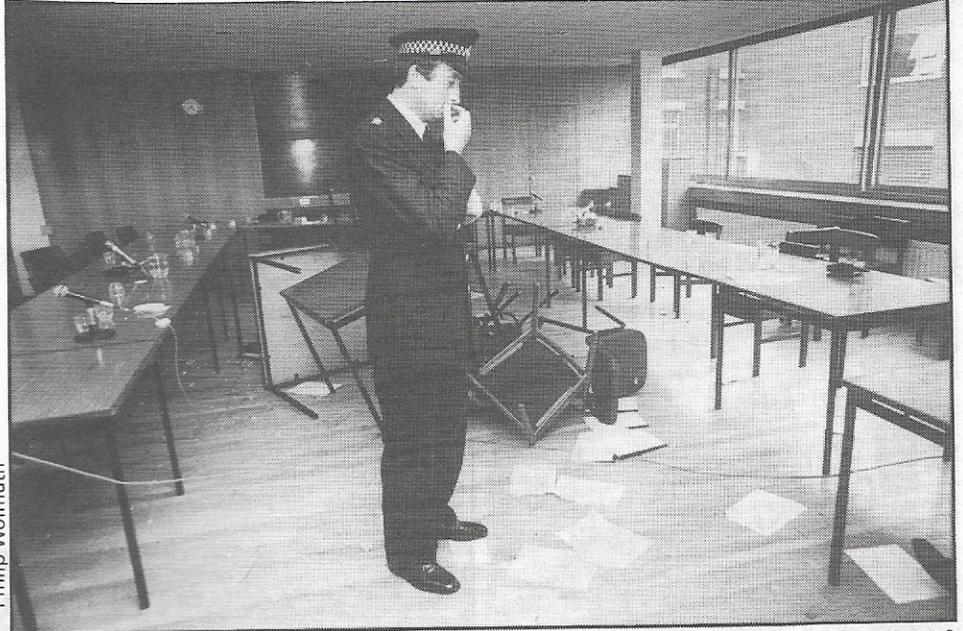
Pritchards (Crothall) and Brengreen (Exclusive) are also Hawley targets. Ashcroft has built up substantial shareholdings in both companies through an elaborate network of personal, family, trust, holding and nominee companies. One nominee company is Susan Holdings Ltd, PO Box 48, St Julian's Avenue, St Peter Port, Guernsey.



In August 1982 Hawley formed a new UK company, Mediclean Ltd, specifically to tender for NHS contracts. Mediclean recently won contracts at Hammersmith Hospital, London, St Helier Hospital Sutton, Princess Mary's Hospital at RAF Halton and the Eastman Dental Hospital London. The Hammersmith contract is worth £464,200 a year for three years and according to the Contract Cleaning & Maintenance Association is 'the most significant to be awarded' so far.

Mediclean is currently tendering in at least thirty-five District Health Authorities including Walsall, Hartlepool and South Derbyshire. The company is on DHA approved company lists in Islington, Hampstead and Bloomsbury in London and also elsewhere in the country.

**'The City remembers other fast growth companies which expanded in the same way before diving into oblivion'.  
Daily Telegraph 3rd Oct 1984.**



Philip Wolimouth

**Hammersmith SHA's co-opted member dealing with the aftermath of their 19th September decision to bring in Mediclean to clean Hammersmith Hospital.**

## LOUSY PAY FOR CLEANING STAFF

Their tenders show up different pay rates for cleaning staff in different areas: they will offer workers on the Harefield Hospital contract £2.107p per hour; Bridge Hospital Mid-Essex £1.725p per hour; meanwhile workers on the RAF Halton contract earn a mere £1.65p per hour. Saturday and Sunday rates, holiday entitlement and sick pay are all well below NHS rates.

Michael Ashcroft's US salary is \$50,000 per annum. It is paid on a monthly basis into Wendy H & Michael A Ashcroft's account (a/c no. 458021) with the Hollywood Federal Savings and Loan Association, PO Box 89, Hollywood, Florida.

\$\$\$

Hawley Group turnover 1978: £1m.  
1984: £274m

£££

Since Ashcroft took over the Group, profits have risen sixty-fold.

\$\$\$

Hawley may not be in favour with the City's financial institutions but it hasn't fallen foul of shareholders such as

Fife Regional Council	200,000
Tayside Regional Council	300,000
Lothian Regional Council	600,000
Devon County Council	1,147,500
LB Croydon	135,000
LB Harrow	100,000
and others...	

## BACK IN THE USA

Hawley is moving its headquarters to the tax haven island of Bermuda. The Group is restructuring so that UK operations become offshoots of an American company which in turn is a subsidiary of a Bermuda-registered company! As well as the obvious tax advantages the Directors want investors to see Hawley as 'an international company with equal interests in the US and UK rather than just a British company with US involvement'.

Oxford Cleaning Services Inc Atlanta, was bought by Hawley in 1983 for £9 million. It employs some 13,000 people most of whom are from ethnic minorities. Eighty per cent of ethnic minority workers in the US earn the minimum wage of \$3.35 per hour or less. Since being taken over by Hawley, Oxford has doubled its turnover and pre-tax profits. One of Oxford's major rivals in the US is Pritchards.

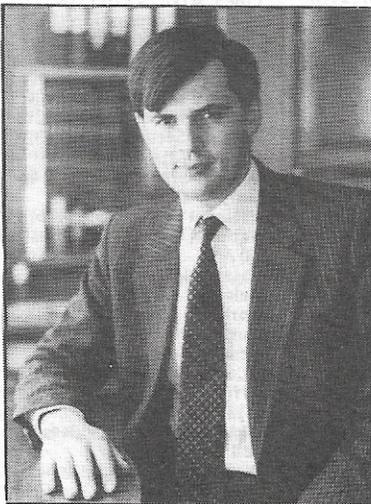
United HealthServ is a specialist subsidiary of Oxford Cleaning Services. It acts as an umbrella for four hospital care companies in Virginia, Arizona, New York and New Jersey as well as Oxford's hospital contracts. United recently won contracts worth \$7 million, including an 800 bed teaching hospital in Phoenix and two other hospitals in Atlanta. Their total of US contracts is 38 and United HealthServ is now the third largest hospital cleaning contractor in the USA.

## GOODBYE TO CROTHALL

Up until very recently Graeme Crothall (see PSA 9) has been Chairman of Mediclean. It is worth noting the difference between his salary expectations and those he thought fit for his cleaning staff. His dismissal from Mediclean and the Hawley Group was partly brought about by his claim for a salary and perks package worth some £150,000 a year – for a part time job! Hawley co-directors however estimated his cost to the Group at nearer £200,000 and felt that he wasn't worth it. His employment has been terminated and Hawley also no longer require the 'consulting services' of his company, Quorden Holdings Inc.

## DON'T TELL THE CLEANERS, BUT ...

Provincial has just appointed a new Executive Sales Director, Philip Evans. He too can look forward to rather better pay and conditions than the cleaning staff. His starting salary is £25,000 a year, reviewed annually, with a potential bonus of £5,000 in the first year. He will be able to join the Hawley Group Pension Plan and be a member of BUPA. Of course, a company car (Ford Granada 2.8 GL) with all expenses including his private petrol, is thrown in. Sick pay is generous too – 100% of basic salary for up to three months continuous. He'll be off on holiday for four weeks.



Simon Mabey, Michael Ashcroft's accountant at Smith & Williamson, London W1. Mabey is a Tory councillor or on 'cuts & privatisation mad' Westminster City Council.

This is an extract from a broadsheet soon to be published jointly by SCAT and Hillingdon Trade Union Support Unit. 'Hawley Cleans Up' – a guide for health workers and other trade unionists – 30p each, discounts for bulk orders. Order now from SCAT 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Tel: 01-253 3627.



For those PSA readers who were unable to attend the Tory party conference, here are some references to privatisation made in various speeches and journals.

### MONDAY CLUB'S 'POLICY PAPER'

- 'The very heart of the Government's reforming mission... is its privatisation programme'.
- 'There is no reason why in 10 years' time every major nationalised industry... should not be in the private sector'.
- '... the actual sum secured by the sale (of state assets) is of far less importance than the act of privatisation itself'.
- 'Opening up a market to competitive pricing... (creates) undreamed of areas of demand'.
- '... the health service unions (have) a stranglehold over administration in many hospitals...'
- 'Many hospital managers have a history of weakness in dealing with manual workers' shop stewards...'
- 'One must also admit that not all private contractors are yet sufficiently experienced in handling the difficulties of transition'.
- 'The drive for... privatisation is bound up inextricably with Conservatives' advocacy of a property owning democracy – not just of homes but of company shares too'.
- '... no State industry, and no local council or NHS support service provided by direct labour, can be immune'.
- 'The Government should commit itself to legislating... during the 1985/6 session without delay'.

### NORMAN TEBBIT, SPEECH TO THE SELSDON GROUP

– 'So what might the nineties hold? Of course, I see us still in office'

'Education... a service which has been providing a product steadily less relevant to the needs of the wealth producing sector... (will have to) yield to the market'.

'Of course, I hope to see a growing private sector in education and training'.

### NORMAN FOWLER, SPEECH IN HEALTH DEBATE

– 'We are spending about £1 billion a year on catering, laundry services, and cleaning. There is no reason on earth why services of that kind should be a public monopoly'.

The Coal industry should without a doubt be privatised, once the McGregor programme for turning it into a modern extractive industry is under way. Any State subsidy required, such as to cover generous redundancy terms or the cost of moving miners to jobs in modern pits, could be clearly defined and paid. Companies could be established on a coalfield basis, or more localised than that... As the industry is privatised step by step, starting with those coalfields with a better pattern of labour relations, miners should be given a quota of shares in their company each year that they are employed. This would go far to break down the archaic industrial attitudes that have inflicted such damage on this industry.

MONDAY CLUB'S POLICY PAPER

**There are three basic headings:**

- **Place names.**
- **Companies.**
- **Services.**

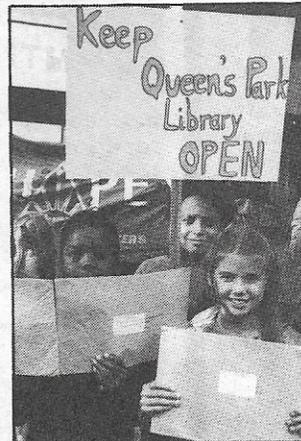
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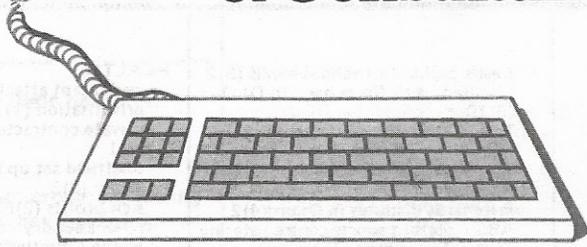
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## Contractors & Consultants



The privatisation of local authorities' computer services is a potential major growth area for the multinational corporations. The UK computer industry's Computing Services Association (CSA) is watching closely recent developments in the London Borough of Merton and the City of Westminster. Meanwhile LAMSAC, in conjunction with the CSA and the Department of Trade, are developing a 'software development agency' to co-ordinate local authorities' computer needs. With the Government and the multinationals represented on such a body it is not difficult to guess in which direction local authorities might be pushed.

### Merton

Tory-controlled Merton Council have decided against privatising their entire Finance Department but sections of the Department are still under threat. Following a proposal from the Director of Finance to turn the Department into a private company run by himself, consultants Deloitte, Haskins & Sells were commissioned to carry out a feasibility study.

Deloitte's conclusions were that:

- Privatisation was feasible but that implementation costs would outweigh likely savings.
- There would be difficulties linking a private company into the Council's management structure.
- There would be problems of confidentiality.
- A private company might be unable to perform a satisfactory service.

Merton, however, are to make savings in the Department based on Deloitte's other recommendations, which include the possible privatisation of Data Processing; Rates; Internal Audit; Mortgage Management; Debt Collection; Cashiers; Superannuation Fund; Investment Management.

#### RECRUIT COMPUTER STAFF

While Deloitte's quote NALGO's position of total non-co-operation with a private company as a major factor in the high cost of privatisation, they also add that all potential problems can be overcome. The report therefore dangerously paves the way for Merton or any other authority to privatise entire Finance Departments.

As Merton NALGO Branch Secretary Geoff Patmore says, a key lesson for other branches facing similar threats is to try and ensure full union membership of computer services staff.

### Westminster

Westminster City Council's seventy computer service staff are under threat of losing their jobs. The Council are considering the implementation of 'Facilities Management' (privatisation) and have commissioned a feasibility study from consultants Price Waterhouse. Facilities Management (FM) is provided by a private contractor and it covers a range of information technology services from helping a client select the right equipment it needs right through to completely taking over all computer services.

Like Deloitte's report in Merton, Price Waterhouse have highlighted some disadvantages of Westminster fully contracting out, but at the time of writing, Westminster has deferred its final decision.

Two of the leading UK companies interested in local authority computer services are Hoskyns Group Ltd and Scicon Ltd. Hoskyns claims to be the 'pioneer' of Facilities Management but as yet neither company has taken over a local authority contract.

### hoskyns

The Hoskyns Group Ltd has offices in London, Birmingham and Manchester, sixteen cities in the USA and also in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Nigeria and South Africa. It is a subsidiary of a US multinational, Martin Marietta Data Systems Inc, itself the computer services division of the Martin Marietta Corporation. Marietta is one of the world's largest information services companies with over 4,000 employees and offices in 25 countries. Annual turnover is some \$3.9 billion, over 50% coming from its aerospace activities. It is a major contractor on the NASA space shuttle programme and is also active in micro-electronics, robotics, biochemistry and a host of other emerging technologies.

The Hoskyns Group Ltd's 1983 profits were £2.357 million and it has over 1,000 employees. Its activities include almost every aspect of the commercial use of computers in management and information technology. Hoskyns specialises however in 'the management of change' and the 'harnessing of... technology to provide business users with the means... to operate efficient, effective, informed and therefore profitable way'.

### Scicon

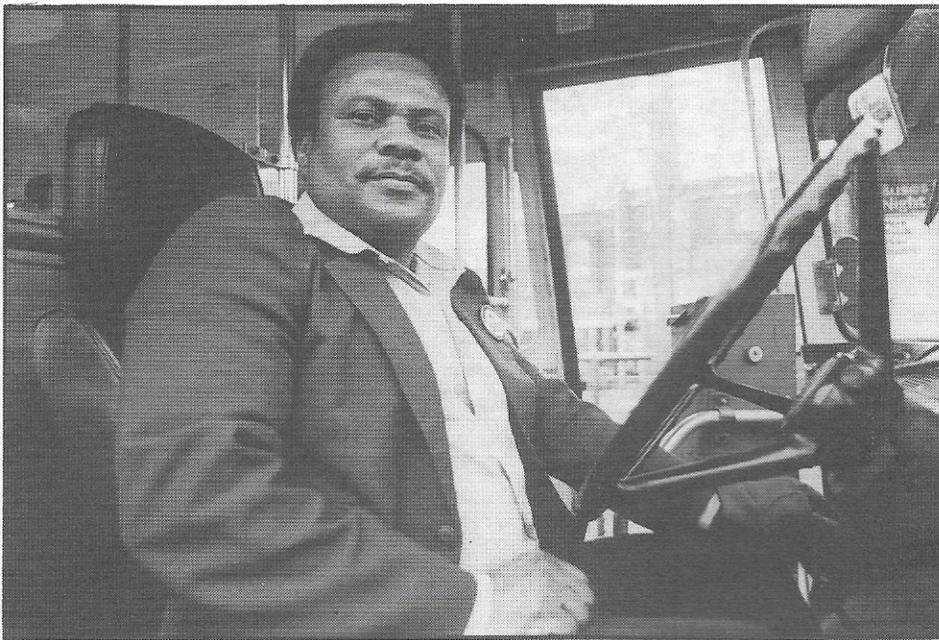
Scicon Ltd is one of a string of computer, consulting and telecommunications companies that are subsidiaries of British Petroleum PLC (BP). It is a multinational with bases in the Middle East, USA and Europe. Its main areas of operation are defence; processing services; energy, communications and commerce and industry (particularly banking and financial institutions).

Defence contracts include: a logistics support system for the Oman Ministry of Defence; the UK's Royal Artillery command and control system; scientific and computing support to all major Ministry of Defence research establishments and a study of terrain data for the Directorate of Military Surveys. New contracts worth £11.1 million were won in 1983. Communications work last year included consultancy work for Mercury (the private telecommunications network) and for Radio Suisse in Berne, Switzerland, who aim to 'be a European leader in private network services by providing a gateway for international private telecommunication'.

Scicon Ltd has nearly 900 employees and 1983's profit was £1.54 million on a turnover of £24.95 million. The company slogan is '... the solutions company'.

Your  
services  
today.  
Tomorrow  
your job?





Philip Wormuth

## Tyne & Wear

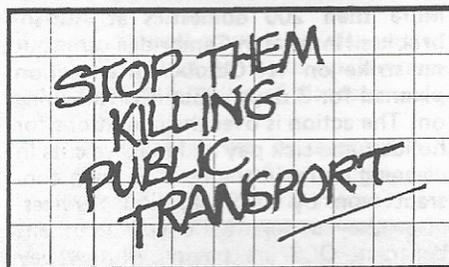
The Bus and Rail Action Group (BRAG) is a joint committee of transport workers' unions in Tyne and Wear.

For three years BRAG has campaigned to ensure that public transport meets the needs of local people. Tyne and Wear has the country's first integrated bus/metro system. It serves an area of high unemployment where more people depend on public transport than anywhere else in the country. The system is cost-effective, efficient and popular. A recent survey showed that:

- 70% of the country's population use public transport every week.
- 49% rely solely on public transport.
- 83% considered public transport to be essential for at least one member of every household.

BRAG has already been campaigning against the proposed abolition of the Metropolitan Authorities. Abolition, they say, plus the proposed deregulation/privatisation of buses, will mean the destruction of Tyne and Wear's public transport system. The resultant job losses and hardship to users will add to the area's severe problems.

For details of BRAG's activities and copies of their publicity material (useful for other campaigns) write to BRAG, c/o Union Office, Byker Depot, 394 Shields Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE6 2YG. Tel: 091 2761411 or Mike Watson on 0632 327371 ext. 285.



Massive opposition to Government proposals for deregulation and privatisation of bus services (see PSA9) is being organised. CAPITAL are co-ordinating a Transport Week of Action in London and the Met Authorities from 24th November to 1st December. The week includes events to highlight the special needs of women, the elderly, disabled and youth. On 27th November there is a mass lobby of Parliament. More details from CAPITAL 308 Grays Inn Road WC1. Tel: 01-833 4022.

● The new transport quango London Regional Transport is inviting tenders for an initial batch of thirteen bus routes. LRT expect the first contracted services to start by mid 1985.

## Hereford SCANDAL

Mr D. B. Buchanan, one of the private bus operators running a service in the Hereford area (see PSA9) has had two vehicles banned from use due to their being dangerous and unfit. A third has had a delayed prohibition order placed on it. West Midlands Traffic Commissioners also found that Buchanan's company had no maintenance facilities for his vehicles. Only one of his vehicles was not defective. Hereford is being used by the Government to prove how well privatisation can work.

## More News

### PRISONS FOR PROFIT?

Michael Forsyth (MP for Stirling, right-wing think tanker and privatisation pamphleteer) has called on the Government to set up a working party to investigate privatising the prison system. Forsyth claims that the privatisation of a number of prisons in the USA has solved the kinds of problems now facing Britain's jails. Companies such as Corrections Corporation of America, an offshoot of Hospital Corporation of America, claim to be 'on the cutting edge of a whole new industry' in the USA. One prisoner however, has already sued a private company over alleged inhuman conditions. Britain's TV screens could soon be featuring advertising such as 'After a gruelling seven years in a BUPA jail, why not recuperate in a BUPA hospital?!

### PRIVATE PARA-POLICING

To earn a decent living wage, your local neighbourhood Pritchards street cleaner could soon be moonlighting as your local neighbourhood 'bobby on the beat' if a Swiss trend is followed here. In Switzerland, security firm Securitas has a contract to provide 'patrolling and other para-policing' services to thirty villages.

### PRIVATE PENSIONS

State benefits and pensions for the sick, disabled and pregnant should be replaced with private schemes available through banks and insurance companies say the Adam Smith Institute. They want to see employers' contributions to pensions schemes scrapped: employees would have to have private insurance against death, childbirth and permanent disability. Compulsory insurance would be required for everybody under 50 to cover funeral expenses! The changes would save the Government £12,000 million and guarantee new business for the banks and insurance companies. Their recent report on Social Security Policy costs £5.80.

### McALPINE CASHES IN

McAlpine Homes have bought a four acre site from the South West Thames Regional Health Authority for £2 million. They have demolished the former hospital (closed under the RHA's rationalisation plans two years ago) and are building 19 luxury houses for sale at over £200,000 each. Fifteen former nurses homes are being refurbished by McAlpine for sale at between £64,950 and £75,000.

## NHS Barking

The domestics' strike continues, aiming to win back their jobs and full cleaning hours at the hospital. The mass picket on 15th October brought 300 supporters onto the picket line. Another mass picket is planned for 13th November. The strike committee is appealing for larger numbers of supporters to turn out to match the heavy police presence now at the hospital. There is also a renewed appeal for financial support for the strikers, who face the prospect of a bleak Christmas unless the level of donations increases again.

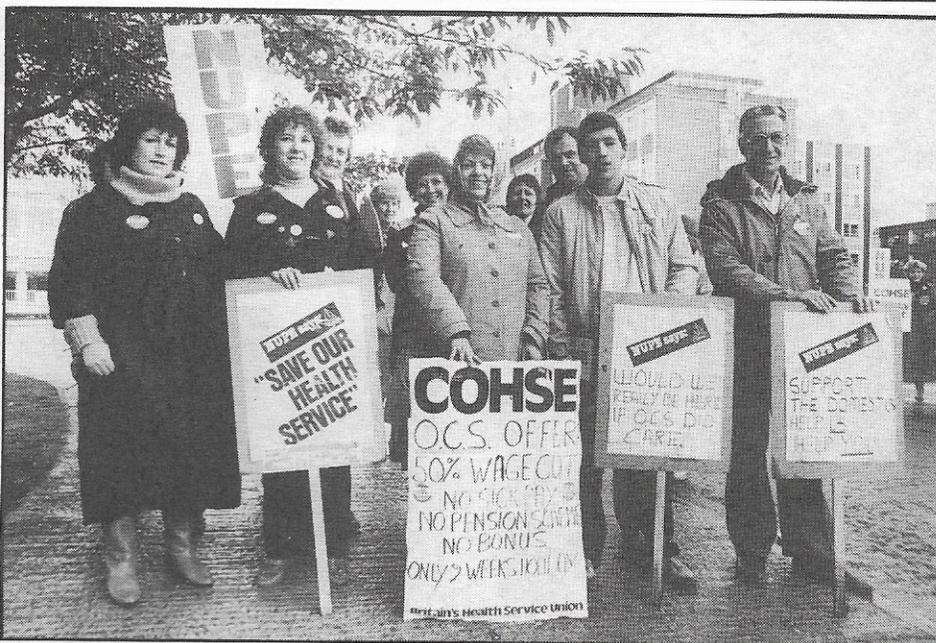
Contact: Strike Line 01 592 5038.

Meanwhile tribunal hearing on 24th-26th October found that the Barking Hospital domestics had been unfairly dismissed by Crothalls and should be compensated.

## Hammersmith

The strike at Hammersmith Hospital is over and the domestic staff have gone back to work. Redundancy notices have been issued and Mediclean are due to start their three year contract on 27th January. Lidia Frazer, NUPE Branch Secretary told PSA 'None of us have any regrets over the action we have taken. We have learned a lot. Although we are back at work we are still in fighting spirit.'

Mediclean's contract cuts hours from 6170 to 2802 per week and jobs from 207 to 158, with full-time jobs reduced from 122 to 28. So far Mediclean have not tried to recruit existing NHS staff to work for them.



Philip Wolimuth

More than 200 domestics at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge came out on strike on 1st October in an action planned for 3 days — but it is still going on. The action is over the conditions for holiday and sick pay and massive cuts in cleaning hours in the new cleaning contract won by OCS Hospital Services, after they undercut a 5 year Crothalls contract. OCS are paying Whitley pay scales, but the 40-60% cut in cleaning hours means huge reductions in income for domestic staff.

The domestics' action has support from porters, catering staff and ambulance workers, and the action is clearly beginning to bite. Cleaners are bussed in at night by OCS to clean the clinical

areas of the hospital. Wards cannot be cleaned at night, and some are reported as being in a bad state. Rubbish and soiled linen is piled high in the hospital corridors.

### Nurses and doctors support

Support for the domestics has also come from nurses, some of whom have joined the picket line while off duty, and there have been donations and indications of support from doctors. There is also support from other local hospitals and trade unions.

Donations and messages of support to Strike Office, 272 Hills Road, Cambridge Tel: 0223 248893.



## Catering For Profit

Gardner Merchant, a Trusthouse Forte subsidiary, is to withdraw from tendering for NHS contracts. Managing Director Gary Hawkes recently announced that the company is not willing to compete for fixed price contracts which will involve reduced standards, cuts in staffing levels and worse terms and conditions for staff. Gardner Merchant until recently held the only two private catering contracts in the NHS, one worth £2m at the Bethlem and Maudsley Hospitals in south London, and one at the 28-bed Ellen Terry Memorial Hospital in Reigate, Surrey.

This principled stand by Gardner Merchant doesn't ring quite true, given the notorious history of Trusthouse Forte's treatment of its hotel employees. The real concern of this company and others in the Hospital Caterers Association is the inadequate profits to be made from NHS catering.

### MORE PROFITABLE MARKETS

Meanwhile Gardner Merchant is cultivating more profitable markets: they recently won the catering contract for 28 of 31 private Nuffield Hospitals to add to existing contracts at the Cromwell Hospital in London, five BUPA hospitals and many in Europe. (Also active in the private sector is Grand Metropolitan whose company set up to provide hotel ser-

Philip Wolimuth



vices to other companies, Services to Hospitals Ltd, which has contracts in 90 different locations including acute surgical units, convalescent homes and homes for the elderly).

### MONEY TALKS

Despite Trusthouse Forte's record of massive donations to Conservative Party funds, ministers have not given way to pressure from the catering giant to change NHS contracts. Despite the fact that the first six hospital catering contracts put out to tender under the current privatisation drive were won in-house, that pattern has begun to break. Spinneys, a subsidiary of Steel Brothers Holdings, (see PSA8) recently won the catering contract at Orpington Hospital in Kent (worth £1.5m over 3 years) and also the former Gardner Merchant contract at the Bethlem and Maudsley Hospitals. And they want more: 'As soon as they go out to tender, we'll be there' says Managing Director Vic Laws. The catering contract for Farnham Road Hospital in Surrey has gone to Allied Medical Catering.

## DHAs Latest

Despite increasing pressure from the DHSS, twelve authorities are defying the Government's privatisation Circular. These include Sheffield, Coventry and Preston plus five each in London and Scotland. Some 26 authorities have agreed to include Fair Wage Clauses in tender specifications.

### MORE ACTION

In **Haringey** hospitals, ancillary workers came out on strike for a week from 8th October in protest at the DHA's September decision to give in to DHSS and RHA pressure and submit a tendering timetable.

In **Barnet** on October 17th a 24 hour strike by ancillary workers against privatisation brought picket lines to the gates of most Barnet hospitals. The unions' fears of redundancies if private contractors are brought in have been confirmed by the Deputy District Administrator. The unions also predict a cut in wages of up to 40% and are fighting for a Fair Wage clause to be included in contracts.

## Laundry Bag

**Harrow DHA** have recently hired their third laundry contractor within three years. First, **Sunlight** only lasted nine months; then **Westcott** took over the contract but tried to renegotiate the price as they were unable to make enough profit. The DHA refused and **Westcott** withdrew giving the DHA three months' notice. This left the DHA with only a short time to find an alternative. Instead of going in-house, the DHA found **Royal Jersey Launderers and Cleaners**, who started on 1st October.

### Small world

Up until three years ago, **Westcott Laundries** was owned by the **Westcott** family but they sold all but two of their companies to **Co-operative Cleaners**. Therefore the **Westcott** that had the **Harrow** contract was in fact a subsidiary of **Co-Operative**. **Royal Jersey** however is one of the two companies that the **Westcott** family kept control of! The **Co-Op's** **Westcott Laundry** and **Royal Jersey** are both based in North East London. When **PSA** contacted the **DHA**, nobody was able to comment on the apparent coincidence.

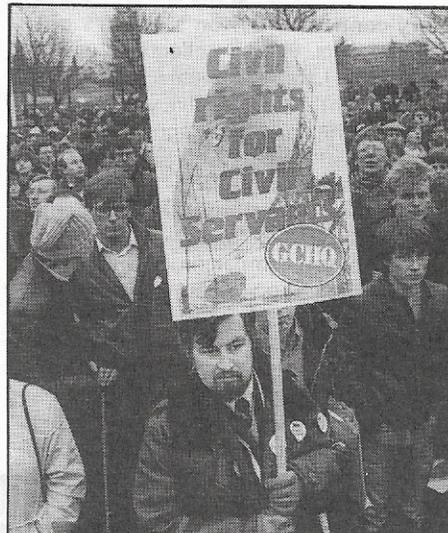
### Union action

Meanwhile the health unions have called a one day strike for 13th November in protest at two recent DHA decisions. Cuts of 45% are to be made to domestic services before the tendering process starts and the timetable has been brought forward by six months from July to January 1985.

# CIVIL SERVICE



Civil Servants need jobs too...



Philip Wolmuth

**Defence Secretary Heseltine's much publicised reforms in the Ministry of Defence have hidden from public view a whole range of new threats to jobs in his empire.**

The Royal Navy Supplies section is currently going through feasibility studies which the union believe will lead to hiving off data processing, teleprinter, typing and clerical work. All the unions in that section have now agreed a policy of non-cooperation with the feasibility studies. Other M.O.D. sections including R.E.M.E. workshops and RAF support services are under similar threat. Morale in MOD unions is understandably low, with Royal Ordnance Factories on the way to privatisation and naval dockyards soon to follow. Since 1979 47,000 jobs have been lost in defence, nearly half the total cut in civil service manpower.

The victims of war may too be relying on private companies for their needs in the future. The artificial limb and appliance centres, currently under the auspices of the DHSS, are undergoing a review, expected to lead to privatisation. Commercial interests, including **Boots**, your friendly neighbourhood chemist, are showing a keen interest in taking over the service, which includes the supply of 100,000 wheelchairs a year.

### Consultants

**Cooper and Lybrand**, whose recent history embraces both the blueprint for the government's Audit Commission and accounting services for the notorious Italian Banco Ambrosiano (whose chairman Calvi ended up hanging under Blackfriars Bridge), are busy in a number of government departments. They are currently conducting a study for the Treasury and Cabinet Office on 'communications between management and staff' which the unions fear will have grave implications for the Whitley system and collective bargaining practice. True to form these 'experts on efficiency' are late in delivering this report which was due earlier in the autumn. They are also in the MOD's accounts department recommending staff cuts, and studying future accounting and financial practices for the Royal Ordnance Factories on

their way to Companies Act company status. A detailed account of **Cooper and Lybrand connections and record in October's Red Tape**, the CPSA newspaper, 215 Balham High Road, London SW17.



The Treasury is to privatise the entire computer operations of central government in an effort to 'contribute to the wellbeing of the UK information technology industry and its ability to compete in export markets'. Private companies can look forward to some £750 million worth of work per year. Over 17,500 civil servants are currently employed in computer services.

Cleaning, catering, laundry and maintenance are also under threat as are central services including typing, reprographic services, press cuttings, store operations, audit, legal, statistical services, training and security guarding on non-sensitive sites. According to Treasury figures 14,620 Civil Service jobs lost between 1979 and 1983 were due to privatisation.



Philip Wolmuth

17th September demonstration in London against Post Office closures.

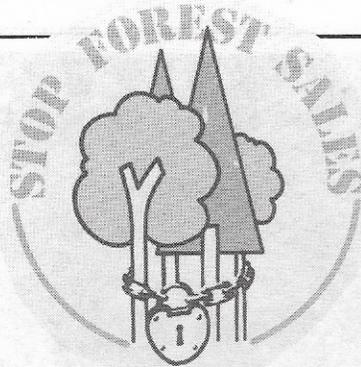
## Wastecare Out

Tory-controlled Sefton Council's plans to hand its refuse collection over to Wastecare Ltd have been scrapped. The DLO recently 'won' a five year contract to keep the service by agreeing a package of savings of £150,000, a loss of 12 jobs without compulsory redundancies and the introduction of MSC schemes. According to the local T&GWU, a key to the unions' campaign was the strength of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. 'We organised a positive campaign based on the fact that we have always provided a good service to the community. Talking to people on the doorstep was very important. We built up a lot of support that way' a spokesperson said. The campaign included mass leafletting, public meetings and lobbying councillors.

The campaign convinced a number of Tory councillors not to privatise the service but a council fact-finding mission to Wandsworth, where Wastecare already handle the refuse collection, also helped. There they saw practical evidence of the need to keep the service in-house. Sefton Council spent over £20,000 on this abortive attempt to make 'savings', and an opposition councillor has now referred the matter to the District Auditor. **Contact the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, c/o Transport House, Islington, Liverpool.**

## UDT In

Council tenants in Nottingham may have to pay for new central heating in their homes. Faced with a massive modernisation programme which cannot be financed due to Government cuts, the Labour council has started discussions with **United Dominion Trust** and **EMGAS** to set up a deal where if tenants want improvements they will automatically get finance through UDT. Only the better-off would be able to use such a scheme but it could also mean that all future improvements could be financed in this way.



Trade unions fear another increase in the Government target for forest sales. Following the 1981 Forestry Act which launched the privatisation process, the initial £40 million sales target was increased to £65 million in 1982. A new target of £82 million was set in 1983 and the unions now predict this being raised to £100 million. Early assurances from Government that only a limited sales programme was intended have been forgotten and some ministers are now believed to be pressing for the disbandment of the Forestry Commission and the sale of its entire assets, including some 3 million acres of land.

### Communities smashed

The impact on jobs increases as the Commission pushes ahead to meet each new government target. The Commission's last report shows 300 jobs lost in a year. The unions' fight to save 9 forestry jobs in Derbyshire or 10 on Spey-side in Scotland is of far greater significance than the simple numbers indicate, for whole communities depend on those jobs. When a 1500 acre forest in Brecon was sold recently for £2.5 million, 10 workers lost their jobs; the future of their village, Llaneglwys, dependent on the forest and composed of Commission houses, has been put at risk. Rationalisation programmes involving closure of depots and offices have threatened the viability of many small villages. Forestry Commission houses are left empty and deteriorating — or are sold off as second homes, as in the Kielder Forest in Northumberland.

**More information from: Ted Radford, Trade Union office, Forestry Commission; Tel: 031-334 0303.**

## Information

### COMMUNITY ACTION MAGAZINE

Special 36 page feature on Contract Cleaning. Based on interviews with cleaners working for contractors and DLOs. Covers 'Health and Safety', 'Pay and Conditions' and 'How The Bosses Operate'. Includes 4 pages of Action Notes on organising. Price £1 inc. postage or included if you start a year's subscription for £3.60. **From: Community Action, 27 Clerkenwell Close EC1.**

**ACTION PACK FOR LIBRARY CAMPAIGNS.** For local anti-cuts campaigns, the pack contains poster blanks, publicity notes and examples of campaigns. **From Guy Daines, St. Pancras Library, 100 Euston Road, London NW1 2AJ. Tel: 01-278 4444.**

London's Campaign Against Estate Sales (CAGES) has recently produced its first Bulletin. It argues that tenants and trade unionists should organise together to stop sales and gives examples of joint campaigns. Useful for campaigns outside London too! **Copies price 10p + pp from THIRRC, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street London E2. Tel: Carmel Bolger on 01-739 3630.**

The PSA Supplement 'Facts and Fantasies: Buying shares in privatised public assets', originally issued in PSA no 5, is still available. Read it!

## Information needed

**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.

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