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AN ANTI-PRIVATISATION NEWSLETTER FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

No 12 DEC 1984

CONTRACT RACISM

Asian workers employed as cleaners at Heathrow Airport are beginning an organised fightback against private contractors. For eight years prior to 14th October 1984, Reliance Cleaners held the cleaning contract which varied between terminals. Ninety-eight per cent of Reliance's employees were Asian, the majority women. The other two per cent were supervisors, white men.

The workers claim that they suffered extreme exploitation the whole time. For the past five years, Southall Rights and later Southall Employment Unit have handled numerous individual cases against Reliance, with workers alleging:

- Racial harassment and abuse by supervisors.
- Arbitrary and unfair dismissal.
- Suspension from work for no apparent reason.
- Being forced to accept changing work places or shifts other than specified in their contract.
- Being forced to do extra work for the same pay.
- Being forced to sign new contracts when returning from holidays.
- Having holiday entitlement, sick pay, maternity leave and other benefits reduced or not paid at all.

Reliance lose the contract

In July 1984 it became known that Reliance were to lose the contract. They had been undercut by Home Counties Cleaning (see PSA 5&8). On 5th July, redundancy notices were issued to all workers giving the required 90 days' notice. But on 12th July, further notices were issued to some workers giving only 1, 2 or 3 weeks' notice! Then, in order to avoid redundancy payments, Reliance supervisors tried to cause resignations among the workers with a systematic harassment campaign over the following three months.

- Workers were bullied into resigning.
- The DHSS was given false information about workers' entitlement to benefits.

- Workers were stopped from collecting their wages.

Eight workers currently have unfair dismissal claims lodged with the Industrial Tribunal. Reliance have tried to settle by offering a paltry £37 each per worker. Southall Employment Unit say the sum should be nearer £900 each but no compensation would be enough for the humiliation and degradation suffered. Reliance have also hired consultants Administration & Advisory Services Ltd of Saffron Walden, Essex to act for them. The company is now refusing to negotiate directly with the Employment Unit.

THE RULES

Employment law states that a person over pensionable age who is made redundant is not entitled to a redundancy payment. It is customary for elderly Asian women with UK citizenship to only have the year of their birth entered in their passport — not the full date. As they reach pensionable age, the DHSS accept the end of the year stated as the date that person becomes eligible, ie 31st December.

... RELIANCE'S RACIST VERSION

An Asian woman born in 1924 worked for Reliance for 9 years. She was made redundant on 14th October 1984. Reliance refused her redundancy payment as they said she was 60. The DHSS accept that the woman would not be 60 until 31st December — but Reliance have their own racist rules.

Many of the workers are now employed by the new contractors Home Counties, but some refused because of the appalling pay and conditions offered. Home Counties were able to undercut Reliance by reducing workers' pay by £2 per week and increasing their workload.



Because of the lack of trade union response to the workers' conditions over the years, the workers have been turning to their own community organisations for help. Now alliances have been built with the Southall branch of the GMBATU which is recruiting the majority of Asian workers at the airport. It is hoped to organise both cleaners and catering workers (whose pay and conditions are also bad) and as part of the recruitment drive a public meeting will be held on 26th January at Southall Town Hall. A co-ordinated campaign against racial harassment and appalling conditions is necessary, say the workers, if private contractors are to be stopped. The campaign needs financial support — donations to and more information from Southall Employment Unit, 54 High Street, Southall, Middlesex. Tel: 01-571 4920.

- Another Reliance company has been formed to tender for NHS cleaning contracts but it looks like the Hawley Group (see PSA 11) will take Reliance over in the near future. This, however, would not lead to improvements for workers...

GRAND Wastecare FAILS

Wandsworth DUSTCARTS COULD KILL

Wastecare Ltd's (Grand Met) Wandsworth refuse contract hits the headlines again with the news that eight of thirteen dustcarts used to collect the giant paladin bins from council estates are in such dangerous condition that 'they should be taken off the road immediately'.

A safety inspection by an Occupational Hygienist from the London Hazards Centre produced a catalogue of defects resulting from the company's failure to maintain the vehicles. The crucial safety device which prevents the giant bins from crashing down was either missing or broken on eight vehicles, placing the operatives in great danger. The company is in breach of the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act with regard to its own employees — and also with regard to members of the public. Two of the vehicles inspected had hoppers so seriously damaged that jagged metal edges protruding presented a real threat to other road users, particularly cyclists.

Wastecare failed to respond to allegations that the company had neglected to have dustcarts regularly checked and maintained since they were taken over in perfect condition from Wandsworth Council two years ago. Their PR consultant is reported as saying, 'Following this report having been brought to our attention, where action is required we will take it'. In fact the company was more concerned than they admitted: the London Hazards Centre received a visit from Wastecare's management, not apparently to seek advice as to how they could better protect their employees, but to find out who had the nerve to blow the whistle on them!

More Complaints

Now the local press won't let the dust settle. On 9th November the *Balham and Tooting News* reported that 2,323 people had complained to Wandsworth Council about the refuse collection service (or lack of it) since the beginning of May, but the system of penalty points had led to only one fine of £700 for the company, in October.

The *News* also reported that every day up to 10 agency staff are taken on to cover for sickness — and they are given neither a copy of the safety regulations nor protective boots. They also have to sign away their right to make a claim for industrial injury! The London Hazards Centre is at 103 Borough Road, SE1. Tel: 01-261 9558.

Basingstoke 40 SACKED



Philip Wolmuth

Wastecare is in trouble with its refuse contract in Basingstoke, where it has recently sacked nearly 90% of its workforce.

Of a total workforce of 45 all but 7 were T&GWU members, and the contract has been marked by a series of walk-outs over the company's failure to observe agreed procedures, its arbitrary hiring and firing of workers, and its lack of concern with health and safety matters, including failure to maintain vehicles safely as in Wandsworth.

In a now familiar saga of hopeless under-tendering for the contract and impossible workloads for operatives, pressure from the council led the company to blame its failure to fulfill its contract on the workforce and started sacking workers. In early November the Council gave Wastecare an ultimatum to clear up a huge backlog of uncollected refuse within a week. The company approached individual crews and offered financial inducements to cooperate. The workers agreed to try, but by the end of the week it was clear that the task was impossible. On Tuesday 20th November operatives arrived for work to find that 21 extra temporary staff had been taken on. In direct breach of their agreement with the union, management tried to make union members work with non-union crews, under threat of sacking if they refused. The union members walked out and have been on strike ever since.

Mass Sacking

When the workers failed to return to work on November 30th, the company sacked them. A union approach for a settlement via ACAS was rejected by Wastecare, who then submitted their conditions for re-employment of the strikers. They demanded that the staff work a 16-hour day to clear the backlog

with no extra pay. So the strike goes on.

In the early days of the strike Wastecare ran its operation entirely on agency staff brought down from London, but some agencies acceded to a T&GWU request to stop sending staff. (These did not include Alfred Marks — see PSA 1). The company has now taken on a full complement of new staff, but in the last week of November they had 86 people working, instead of the usual 43, in an attempt to meet a new Council deadline for clearing the backlog. Dustcarts were reported to be carrying double the correct number of workers.

The union now has a simple aim: to get Wastecare out of Basingstoke. Their campaign will be assisted by complaints from the public, said to be flooding in to the Council. **More information from: Al Pickard, T&GWU Office, 2-4 Winchester Street, Basingstoke, Hants. Tel: 0256 55074.**



Basingstoke Gazette

ISC Again

Wandsworth Council have privatised Council estate caretaking in Roehampton and Initial Services Cleaners Ltd started 'work' on 1st October. The scheme was supposed to be a pilot project to test its success before extending privatisation to the rest of the borough. The service has been split into two: caretaking/sweeping and patrolling. Caring has been cut out.

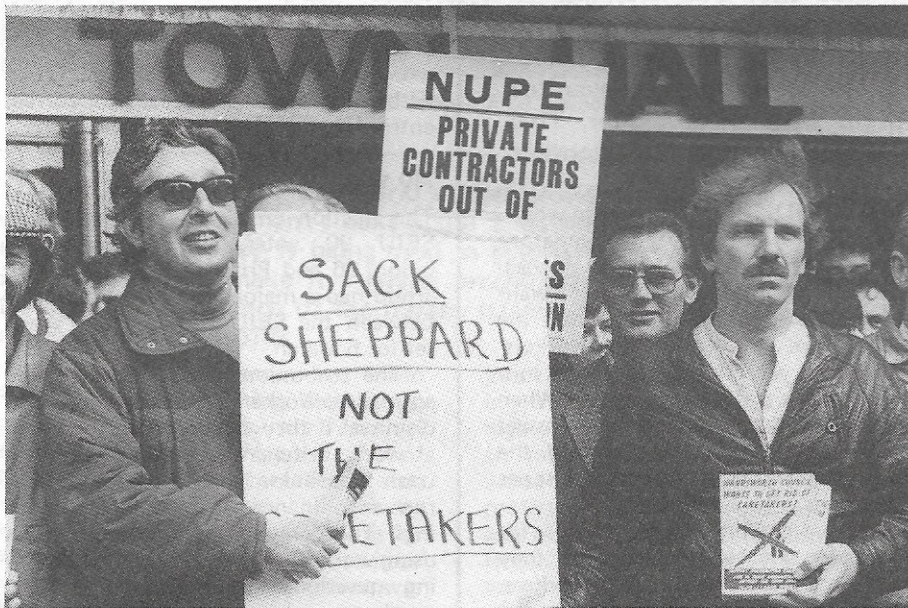
Since Initial started, Roehampton tenants have flooded the Council with complaints including:

- general deterioration in cleanliness of estates.
- maggot infestations affecting landings.
- constantly being trapped in defective lifts.

One tenant was stuck in a lift for over

one hour recently. Someone called the contractor's 'emergency number' but nobody arrived. Tenants called the Fire Brigade who rescued the tenant from the lift before the contractor arrived — one and a half hours later. The tenants recognise that the workers have an impossible job — only 12 people have been employed to patrol 8,000 homes. Cleaners/sweepers earn just £90 per week gross for a 41 hour week, with no enhanced payment for weekend work. They also have to work three weekends consecutively before having two days off.

Roehampton District Tenants Associations are still campaigning for the service to go back to Direct Labour which was a far better service. Meanwhile Wandsworth Council have ignored the tenants' complaints claiming that the scheme is 'extremely favourable'. Now tenders are being invited to privatise the caretaking in the rest of the borough.



Philip Wolmuth

TENDERING NEW LAW

The Government will shortly produce a 'consultation paper' which will spell out how the Tories plan to force local authorities to put services out to tender to private companies.

The Local Government, Land and Planning Act 1980 and two subsequent directives has forced councils to put an increasing amount of repair, maintenance, improvement and construction work out to tender. The law saddles DLOs with many restrictions and makes a mockery of 'competition'. Several DLOs have closed and jobs lost in many others. Now the government wants to extend this to other services. Refuse collection, cleaning, school meals and vehicle maintenance have all been mentioned in government statements. The paper will also include proposals to require Councils to undertake periodic 'cost reviews' and comparisons with private sector costs. This is likely

to apply to architects and legal departments. Legislation through Parliament will be needed before it can be implemented.

The government is clearly responding to demands by big business and right wing pressure groups like the Adam Smith Institute (ASI). Last year the ASI published its Omega Report on local government which called for: 'At the end of a transition period of five years, the full range of local government services should be subject to obligatory tendering by private business. ...

'If a service is of such a nature that it is inevitably loss-making, then we propose that the tendering principle should still apply, with the local authority choosing the qualified contractor that is willing to accept the smallest subsidy to perform the service ... we suggest that the task of monitoring the contracts could itself be contracted out.' The shape of things to come?

SUTCLIFFES — DISABLED SUFFER

In Merton the staff and Governors of St Ann's Special School have expressed concern that the Sutcliffe's meals supplied to the school totally fail to meet the needs of the children, several of whom are very severely physically handicapped and all have severe learning difficulties. The same size portions are delivered for 5 and 16 year olds, the contents cannot be liquidised for children who cannot swallow, the food is unattractive and the plastic containers difficult for some pupils to handle, 'quality is poor, menus repetitious and lacking nutritional or appetising features, with a preponderance of tinned food'. Meals were formerly an important part of social skills teaching in the school, with food served from multi-portion containers to increase the family meal atmosphere. Sutcliffe's refuse to supply the school meals in such containers.

A resolution from two councillors to a council committee demanding some action on the issue points out that 80% of Merton's school population now bring packed lunches rather than eat Sutcliffe's food — but the St Ann's children form a captive market. Most cannot complain or even tell their parents what they had for lunch.

DUDLEY — OCS & EXCLUSIVE SACKED

OCS and Exclusive have finally been sacked by Dudley Council and school cleaning will soon revert to direct labour. Both contractors have been unable to clean Dudley's schools and colleges properly ever since they started the contract (see PSA 11), and services continued to deteriorate. Yet Exclusive recently asked the Council for a 100% increase on the original contract price! The Labour-controlled Council have not however sacked the third contractor, Stretton, who clean Dudley College: they have been given a further one year contract.

CONTRACT COSTS SOAR

Tory-controlled Wirral Council has received 30,000 complaints in fifteen months since Waste Management (National Freight) took over the borough's refuse collection service. The company faces a paltry £17,000 in penalties and the council are spending £50,000 on monitoring the contract. In May, the council were forced to spend an extra £200,000 so that the company could settle an industrial dispute over pay (see PSA 8).

Correction: In PSA 11 we suggested that dustmen working for Wastecare Ltd in Wandsworth were NUPE members. They are in fact members of GMBATU and their £7 per week pay rise was negotiated by the GMB's John McLaren and Mark Panto. We apologise for the error.

PRITCHARD'S HIRE UNION BUSTERS

This is the story of a ruthless campaign by Pritchard Services Group to try to prevent workers having trade union representation on the firm's Atlantic International Airport cleaning contract. At the end of a long and bitter dispute in which Pritchard's paid thousands of pounds to union-busting firms, the workers won. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) recently negotiated a collective agreement.

We cover Pritchard's activities in detail because it could happen here in Britain sooner than you think. This is not a far-fetched idea nor an exaggeration. Pritchard's North American subsidiaries are wholly owned by the parent group based in London. Some American union-busting firms have links in London. The Hospital Corporation of America which operates six private hospitals in Britain has used them to try to prevent hospital workers organising in America. Thatcher Government legislation has ended the closed shop and attempts to force unions to ballot members before strike action and the political levy. The government would clearly like to crush the trade union movement to such an extent that workers would be forced to ballot even for trade union representation and negotiation with an employer. This would effectively end national bargaining which would fulfil another government aim.

Pritchard's dirty fight

In December 1981 the SEIU filed an initial petition for union recognition with the National Labour Relations Board. Section 7 of the National Labour Relations Act guarantees the right to workers to organise a union and to bargain collectively with their employer. The Act lays down specific procedures and regulations. An election was set for 22 January 1982 with SEIU (Local 579) and the Textile Processors union (Local 218).

Immediately Pritchard's learnt of the union organising drive at Atlanta Airport, one of the busiest in the world, they hired a union busting 'independent labour consultant' Gerry Woodward from Affiliated Business Resources Inc (ABR) of Jacksonville, Florida. According to reports filed with the US Department of Labour, Pritchard's paid Woodward and ABR over £49,000 in fees in 1982 plus £760 for printing anti-union posters and leaflets. They also paid thousands of dollars to the notorious anti-union law firm, Ford and Harrison, to deal with legal aspects and delaying tactics. Pritchard's have cleaning contracts at about ten other US airports.

Pritchard sent letters to all employees warning that the firm may lose its contract with the Atlanta Airport Terminal Corporation. They blamed union activity for the firm's poor performance and its fines for failing to implement the contract satisfactorily. They also accused workers of 'stealing from the airlines'. The letter also referred to the Air Traffic Controllers strike in which Reagan systematically destroyed the union. The firm raised doubts about whether the planned wage increase in

March would be paid if the union won.

Pritchard's also started mandatory weekly meetings for all workers on each shift to spell out why they didn't want a union. They tried to claim that the unions were only after the workers' money and would impose fines, initiation fees and assessments. When Pritchard's managers couldn't answer all the questions they abolished the large meetings in favour of a series of meetings with 3-4 workers.

Special meetings were held for supervisors who were told what they could or couldn't say to the workers. Supervisors were told to divide the areas of work into pro- and anti-union



groups. They did favours for anti-union employees and tried to solicit lists of union supporters.

Woodward produced anti-union leaflets and posters. An anti-union crossword puzzle contest was even launched with 15 prizes of ten dollars for correct entries!

No win

The election on 22 January resulted in SEIU 90 votes, Textile Processors union 26 and Pritchard's 94. Since no group had a majority, a run-off election between the SEIU and Pritchard's was set for 5 March.

The anti-union tactics became more aggressive. Workers were threatened with dismissal if they talked about the union at work. Pritchard's constantly tried to trash the union and the way it was run and financed in workplace meetings. The company made several videos using workers at their place of work asking questions about the union. The employee asking the 'best' question was given a £100 prize. Various schemes



Photo Co-op

Union meeting discussing problems of working for Crothalls at Long Island Jewish Hospital, New York



Pritchard's hired union buster Jerry Woodward of Affiliated Business Resources.

and rumours were used to pit anti-union against pro-union workers whilst Pritchard's tried a 'give us another chance' approach on the undecided. Throughout February and March the company continued anti-union workplace meetings, contests with cash prizes and had anti-union posters and leaflets in all rest rooms and offices, all in direct violation of NLRB procedures.

The company then changed the pay day of the pro-union second shift from Friday (the voting day) to the Thursday. They also spread the rumour that the SEIU was way ahead hoping that some union supporters would not bother to come in and vote. The election result was SEIU 90, Pritchard's 95.

However the SEIU filed major objections to Pritchard's illegal activities and the NLRB ordered another election. Pritchard's appealed to NLRB headquarters in Washington, but this was dismissed. Pritchard's were reprimanded for using the threat of losing the contract, mass sackings, stopping the planned wage increase and threatening cuts in benefits to try to coerce the workers to vote against the union.

Another election was set for December 1982 which the SEIU won 103-101 out of 252 eligible workers and despite the continuing activities of Pritchard's and ABR. Two votes were challenged by Pritchard's and they immediately filed frivolous charges against the union to further delay the start of contract negotiations. In November 1983 the NLRB held another hearing to resolve Pritchard's objections. A month later the Board threw out most of these objections. Pritchard's then spent Xmas trying to think up new objections to the election and the NLRB hearing. Three days later the SEIU became the sole collective bargaining representat-

ive for all full time cleaners, equipment and supply maintenance workers employed by Pritchard's at the airport.

The SEIU negotiated a lump sum settlement for back wages for one cleaner who was suspended indefinitely for putting union literature on a company bulletin board. Another pro-union worker was reinstated and paid back wages. The NLRB forced Pritchard's to post a notice to employees for 60 days publicly stating that they would not threaten or harass workers or prevent them exercising their rights as union members.

Contract eventually signed

PSA talked to Susan Eaton of SEIU Local 579 who told us that Pritchards had recently signed a 2 year contract with the union. The firm had also lost the cleaning of one concourse to another contractor but many of the 35 workers displaced were taken on by the new, but non unionised firm. Pritchards were scared that they might lose the rest.

Their anti-union tactics continue. They have already cut hours and switched some full time workers to on-call status thus taking them outside the scope of the contract. They also refuse to recognise shop stewards and have introduced a points attendance system.

SEIU has never had such a hard time as with Pritchard's who are supported by some of the anti-union airlines who also want to cut their costs at any price. It is rumoured that Delta Airlines has helped Pritchards finance its anti-union activities.

The SEIU is now carefully monitoring the contract. They intend to seek major improvements in wages and conditions when it comes up for renewal in 1986.

Further details: Local 579, Service Employees International Union, 161 Spring Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30303, USA.

Atlanta International Airport Workers



Now's your chance to fly the union way—with

SEIU Local 579
AFL-CIO

Pritchard's lose Minneapolis contract

Pritchard's anti-union activities have contributed to them losing contracts. PSA talked to Bob Welby of SEIU Local 26 in Minneapolis where Pritchard's have just lost the cleaning and maintenance contract for two large Prudential Insurance buildings. Workers at one building were represented by the SEIU but Pritchard's continued to pay below union rates.

Prudential criticised Pritchard's poor performance — they regularly hired teenagers to the 70-strong workforce. Despite Pritchard's anti-union activities, an election for union representation in the second building was won by the SEIU in February 1984. Pritchard's refused to reach agreement and when the 3-year contract came up for renewal in the autumn this year, Pritchard's were thrown out. Prudential got the new company to start a day earlier because they were afraid to leave Pritchard's responsible for the building on Halloween night, 31 October. Pritchard's Regional Director was heard to say that they would 'not stay here now'.

More illegal activities in Canada

Meanwhile in Canada, Pritchard's hospital services subsidiary, Crothall Services Ltd, recently illegally assisted two cleaners who tried to stop the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) representing them for collective bargaining.

The rules for unions to win the right to present workers in bargaining with employees are similar to those in America. The two workers had to prove to an Ontario Labour Relations Board hearing that a majority of workers were against the union representation.

CUPE represented eight full time Crothall cleaners at Ongwanada Hospital in Kingston, Ontario. The hearing was held in Toronto. Crothall's gave the two workers two days off, paid them return train fare to Toronto, and hotel and meal expenses. Crothall's manager, James Cooper, travelled with the workers, stayed at the same hotel and they all had dinner together. (The striking Crothall's cleaners at Barking Hospital will no doubt be very surprised at this display of generosity by the company.) In January this year the Labour Relations Board dismissed the case because of Crothall's flagrant intervention.

In March 1984 CUPE reached collective agreement with Crothall's covering both full and part time workers at the hospital. Unusually, the contract also states that if Crothall's gain more contracts in Kingston, Ontario, they will automatically be represented by CUPE. The contract includes wages of £5.00-£5.60 an hour for 37½ hour week (overtime at time and a half), two weeks paid holidays plus 11 statutory holidays and all health insurance plus three quarters of the costs of life insurance, sick pay and disability paid by Crothall's.

There are three basic headings:

- Place names.
- Companies.
- Services.

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WOULD YOU APPROVE THIS LOT?

A report on the 47 companies approved by West Midlands Health Authority as eligible to tender for NHS contracts. Against the RHA's criteria of financial viability, NHS experience and experience in the relevant field, the report found 'many of the companies severely wanting in at least one of these' and raised 'sufficient questions to create serious doubts' about them. As most of the companies referred to seem to crop up on approved lists around the country this report is important for NHS campaigners. Commissioned from the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre by the West Midlands Regional TUC Health Service Committee. Copies from: Bryn Evans, Nalگو, Centre City, Hill Street, Birmingham B5.

CONTRACTING INDUSTRY? Contract compliance and the building industry.

An information pack raising fundamental questions about the use of private contractors. Includes reports on Sheffield Council and the GLC contract compliance units' work and recent conference papers. From the Employment Dept, Palatine Chambers, Pinstone Street, Sheffield S1 2HH. Tel: 0742 755215.

DENTISTS BITE BACK: a new leaflet

from the British Dental Association predicts a rise of 25% in charges for NHS dental treatment in April 1985. It shows how charges for dental treatment have risen by between 190% and 267% since 1979, because of reduced government contributions to dental services. Dentists fear that the government plan is to make some dental services only available on a private basis, and are asking patients to write to MPs. Leaflets from your NHS dentist or the British Dental Association, 64, Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AL.

CLAIMING BENEFIT: a leaflet produced

by DHSS unions advising claimants on how to deal with the notorious snoopers squads, the Specialist Claims Control teams. The leaflet is simple and accessible and a welcome public move from the CPSA and SCPS which have consistently opposed the brutal tactics of the SCCs, 'set up to get claimants off the books', and supported benefit take up campaigns. Contact: CPSA/SCPS c/o DHSS, 52-58 Arcola Street, London, E8 2DL.

Correction: In PSA 10 in an article on HAY-MSL, we incorrectly stated that the company had been working for East Lothian Council. This should have read Lothian Regional Council, which is Tory controlled. Apologies to Labour controlled East Lothian council.

More News

ASHCROFT GOES DOWN TO THE WOODS

In line with trade union predictions (see PSA 11) the Forestry Commission is to sell off £100 million worth of forests by 1989. The Commission has also admitted that due to Government pressure for privatisation, large areas of forest have been sold off very cheaply. While the ownership of the now private land is generally being hushed up, PSA can reveal that Hawley Group (see PSA 11) Chairman Michael Ashcroft has instructed a Cambridge firm of chartered surveyors to seek investments in forestry to a maximum of £1 million. One prospective site is the 960 acre Lambdoubhty in the South of Scotland.

CIVIL SERVICE THREATS

The Insolvency Service which deals with bankruptcies under the Official Receiver in the Department of Trade and Industry has its hands full these days. Civil Service Unions are expecting proposals to privatise the service, and fear that there will be no shortage of accountancy firms eager to move into such a flourishing government concern.

New threats are also reported to the reprographic sections in government offices. Hope for avoiding privatisation rests on the known concern of management over the problem with 'sensitive' material if private companies take over this work.

ROF'S WORKERS TAKE ACTION

In their fourth stoppage this year, 13,000 ROFs workers went on strike on 4th December in protest at redundancies and lost pension rights. Despite Michael Heseltine's assurances of a 'bright future' under privatisation, within 48 hours of the ROFs Bill becoming law, the Government announced 1,800 redundancies. A further 1,000 jobs are to be cut from next April, totalling a 20% cut in just six months.

Although failing to stop the overall privatisation of the ROFs, the T&GWU did manage to stop the ROFs being hived-off separately. MPs are still being pressed to consider the dangers of privatisation and the workforce is determined to keep the Government to its pledge to protect pension rights and redundancy payments.

The £325 million ROFs sale is next in line after the privatisation of British Airways and City institutions are already being geared up to invest in the likely stock exchange flotation in 1986. Meanwhile, the ROFs London HQ has just been moved from Ministry of Defence premises to a building shared with newly privatised Enterprise Oil.

BT THEFT

The Government, supported by the media, would like us to believe that 'almost everyone in the land' now owns shares in the whole of British Telecom. What the massive and expensive hype failed to explain to the public was:

- The Government still owns 49.8% of BT.
- Of the 50.2% actually sold, 49.7% of the total was placed with City institutions before the public were allocated their shares.
- A further 13.8% was placed with institutions in the USA, Canada and Japan.
- BT employees and the public were allocated 38.8% of the total shares for sale.

The share price was fixed so low (50p partly-paid) that on the first day's trading, speculators made a profit of 48p per share. As a result of the knock-down price the taxpayer has lost £1.3 billion. The Government purposely undervalued the shares in order to avoid the flop that they experienced with Britoil and other sell-offs. City institutions are now trying to buy up as many 'small shareholdings' as they can, contradicting the Government's claim that millions of individuals will own shares in BT.

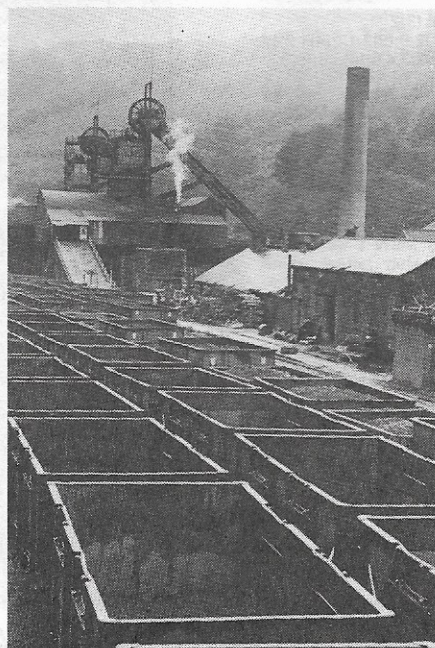
The taxpayer also has to foot the bill for the cost of marketing the sale of BT — so far estimated at some £325 million, £136 million going to City stockbrokers, lawyers, bankers, advisers and other 'professionals'. So while the City is laughing all the way to its own banks, the taxpayer has to pay for what it owned anyway. One stockbroker, Harvard Securities, made £100,000 on BT shares on the first day of trading. How many wards in NHS hospitals were forced to close on 3rd December because of Government cuts?

- Even before the BT scandal, the



Government's privatisation programme has lost the taxpayer over £1.2 billion — and that excludes massive discounts on the 750,000 Council houses sold in the last five years.

DIG DEEP



Coal Board supremo Ian MacGregor thinks it would be 'wonderful' to sell unworkable (sic) pits to miners. He stated publicly recently that '... over the long term, there is no question about it (privatisation), opportunities like this will arise as they have done in other industries.' The NUM know only too well that privatisation of the pits is on the Government's agenda (see PSA 10 for full report).

BRITISH AIRWAYS



Lord King, Chair of BA, refusing to answer PSA's poignant questions about privatisation recently.

The £1 billion sale of the world's most profitable airline, British Airways, is the Government's next major asset sale. Around £200 million of taxpayers' money is being used to help write off BA's debts (total £700 million) to make it a better prospect for the possible February flotation. The balance of the money needed to pay off the debts will come from BA's profits.

UK Government pressure has led to President Reagan ordering the US justice department not to pursue a criminal anti-trust investigation into a number of airlines including BA. It was feared that the inevitable prosecution would hinder plans to privatise BA so applications for cheap transatlantic fares this winter were refused until the investigation was called off.

Meanwhile, the marketing of BT now means that the City is not only looking to the Government to come up with similar 'perks' to go with the BA sale but also an improvement in the Government's inept handling of the sale so far.

Union Action

At the eleventh hour, the National Joint Council For Civil Air Transport unions is urging workers to campaign against BA's privatisation. At the T&GWU's initiative, a series of workplace meetings is being held and educational material is being produced in an attempt to counter BA's massive pro-privatisation propaganda.

BA has distributed thousands of copies of a glossy broadsheet 'Take Off For Privatisation' to the workforce and is showing a video of a 'rigged' TV programme: BA handed out a list of questions it wanted the invited staff audience to ask about privatisation! Workers are also being encouraged to use their money that is held in BA's profit sharing scheme to buy BA shares when they are issued.

In the build-up to the sale, 23,000

jobs have gone. Some 50% of the existing workforce have opted out of BA's highly favourable pension scheme for an inferior one that will leave them worse off and won't dent BA's future profits so much. Some ancillary services are already privatised: catering (Trust House Forte and Swedish Airline Systems) and cleaning (Home Counties) where the largely Asian workforce have appalling working conditions at the hands of the contractors. Also the re-fitting of 'Jumbo jets' has been hived off to Hong Kong rather than being kept in-house. Other services are under threat.

Public Money Ripped Off

Meanwhile BA is spending £42 million on a new look — everything from the planes to the letterheading has been redesigned by Landor Associates, an American company, at a cost of £2½ million. A further £1½ million has been set aside for the pre-privatisation advertising campaign which will probably be handled by Dorlands, the agency that sold us BT.

The T&GWU's national officer, Mick Martin, told PSA 'our job now is to educate the workforce about the evils of privatisation' and that hopefully a lobby of Parliament in the New Year might convince the Government to 'at least keep to their word and not sell off more than 49% of BA' he said.

More News

SELLAFIELD SELL-OFF

British Nuclear Fuels is likely to be privatised within the next 18 months. BNFL is valued at £500 million and is one of the world's largest nuclear fuel businesses. Recent controversy surrounding the safety of the Sellafield (Wind-scale) plant was thought to have hindered privatisation but merchant bankers advising BNFL, Kleinwort 'power behind the BT sale' Benson and Samuel Montagu have given the go-ahead. It is likely that 49% will be sold off in two stages: half to City institutions and the other half to the public. The sale could yet cause embarrassment to the Government if public fears about the nuclear industry cause the flotation to be a flop.

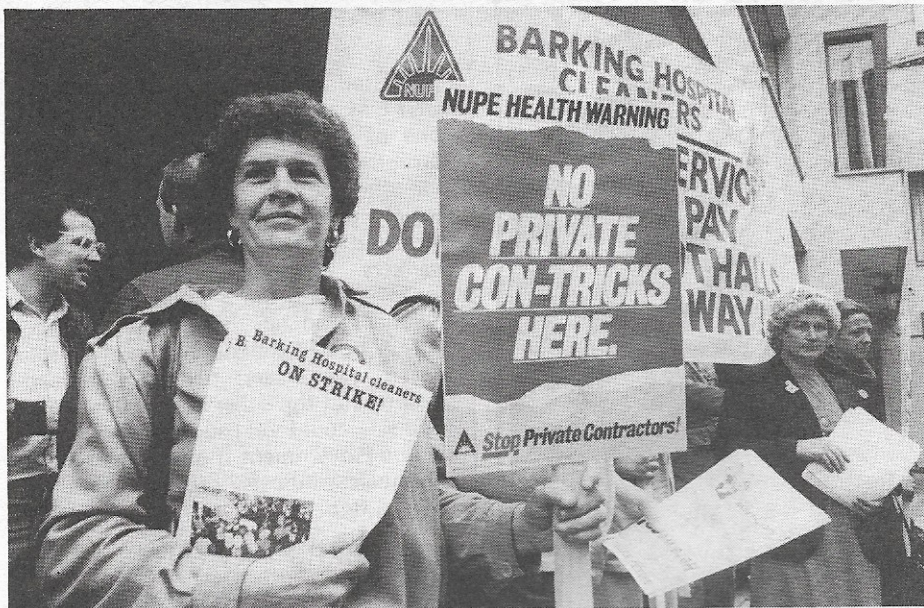
CLEANERS' PAY CUT

Cleaners employed by Exclusive at the Risley HQ of the Atomic Energy Authority have just had their wages cut to £1.50 per hour with no paid holidays. Exclusive's contract is up for renewal and the cuts have been made to beat off competition. Cleaners Ltd, a Pritchards subsidiary, cleans the National Savings Certificates and SAYE offices at Durham. Up until the 1st November the 59 workers earned £1.80 per hour with an average four weeks' paid holiday after one year's service. Now the workforce has been cut by 10 and the remaining workers' wages slashed to £1.40 per hour with reduced holiday pay: their workload however, has increased. Other companies that tendered for the Durham contract quoted wages at £1.20 per hour for an even increased workload.

STOP THEM
KILLING
PUBLIC
TRANSPORT

Government plans for deregulation and privatisation of buses are the most radical threat to public services yet. But opposition is coming from almost every quarter — except cowboy bus operators. Transport week was a success. Events took place all over the country, including a massive lobby of Parliament: 110 buses converged on Parliament Square and over 3,000 people lobbied MPs. Now the many regional campaigns and the national Public Transport Campaign Group intend to step up their action. A 2 million signature petition has been launched calling on the Government to scrap its plans and to improve public bus services. Copies of the petition and details of regional campaigns from CAPITAL, tel: 01-833 4022.

NHS ACTION



Philip Wolmuth

Barking

Outside Barking Hospital the domestics' 24 hour picket line goes on and the strikers remain determined to continue until they get their jobs back. Reports from inside the hospital indicate that nurses are having to do extra cleaning duties as part of their daily routine, though those who are NUPE members are refusing. There are also reports that the operating theatre has to be closed from time to time, and that patients are being discharged early. Dr Beardwell, a consultant at the hospital, has added her voice to mounting public criticism.

The union is currently concentrating on making the DHA reveal its plans for when the contract comes up for renewal in April 1985.

Appeal for Money

The strikers are appealing for wood to keep the brazier going during the cold winter nights and for money to buy warm clothing, as well as support on the picket line.

- In PSA 11 we reported an industrial tribunal decision that the striking domestics had been unfairly dismissed.

Now Crothalls have lodged an appeal against this decision. Contact: Strike Line 01-592 5038.

As the tendering process speeds up under pressure from the DHSS, which is now demanding that neither wage levels nor performance bonds be included in contract conditions, militancy is growing among hospital workers. *The Economist* reported on 3rd November at least 20 'squabbles' breaking out around the country in October, including a 24-hour strike by 6,000 NHS ancillary workers in Liverpool. 'Things will now get worse', they predict.

Hospital closures, too, are still being fought. At St Andrews Hospital in Newham, London, an occupation was organised in the last week of November to try and prevent the closure of the Casualty Department. The police were called in to break the occupation and one of the occupiers ended up in hospital. Newham is now left with one already overworked casualty department, and facilities in neighbouring Tower Hamlets face heavy additional pressure.

NORWICH: win for direct labour

Norwich DHA has broken the pattern of hospital cleaning contracts going to private contractors. The November meeting of the Tory-dominated authority voted 11-3 to accept the in-house tender for the domestic services contract for the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and 3 smaller units. DHA members are reported to have been influenced in their decision by the failure of private school cleaning in Norfolk (PSA 9) and Cambridge-shire (PSA 5), and the experience at Addenbrookes Hospital (PSA 11).

The strongest private contender for the contract was Reckitts which has strong local connections. The

actual tender price from Reckitts was lower than the in-house price, but administrators had calculated that the real costs involved in privatisation, including over £½million in redundancy and early retirement payments, and the costs of administering and supervising the contract and other overheads, would make it more costly than maintaining the in-house service.

Not all good news

The in-house tender contains 1000 more hours per week than the Reckitts tender, but it may not be all good news. Union members were given the chance to vote on a number of options and

Cambridge

On the Addenbrooke Hospital picket line morale is reported to be high and determination to continue the action remains strong. The OCS cleaning operation has come under continuous criticism from the Community Health Council, nurses forced to take on extra duties, the BMA, and a leading paediatrician, Professor John Davis, who has resigned from the DHA over the privatisation decision.

Now a DHA working party set up to investigate the unions' complaints about OCS has confirmed their criticisms. Their report to the DHS meeting on 27th November stated that:

- The use of untrained staff was unacceptable.
- The standard of cleaning was unacceptably low.
- There was a lack of proper supervision of inexperienced staff.
- There was a serious deficiency in quality control.

The DHA's only response was to call for a further report at its next meeting.

Revelations that OCS was using under-age cleaners at the hospital led to dismissal of the youngsters concerned, but there are still many very young people working on the contract. There are reports of OCS workers hassling nurses to supply them with drugs, and of cleaners sitting around in the Hospital's reception area drinking and smoking.

The union's plan to intensify sporadic actions by other NUPE and COHSE members in the Hospital in support of the domestics' action. They are appealing for donations in support of the strikers. **Contact: Strike Office, 272 Hills Road, Cambridge. Tel: 0223 248893.**

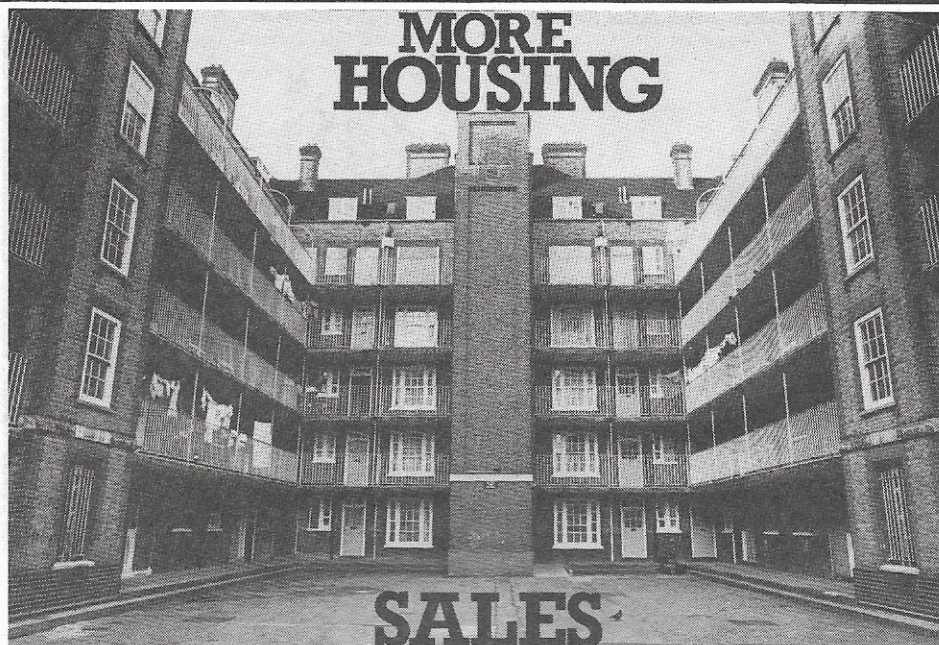


Philip Wolmuth

Rubbish left close to the kitchen by OCS.

chose one which maintains the number of part-time jobs at the expense of full-time jobs. There is an apparent reduction in permanent jobs from 273 to 205, but 21 extra jobs for holiday and sickness relief have been agreed, and 20 new part-time jobs arise from a transfer of some domestic functions to catering. A major redeployment exercise is now underway to place full-time workers on other DHA sites, to minimise the number of jobs lost. Part-time workers are not to have their hours cut by more than 2 hours unless by choice.

More information from NUPE office, Bury St Edmunds. Tel: 0284 64013.



Glasgow

★ Glasgow District Council, despite a manifesto pledge of no land sales under any circumstances, has agreed to sell 91 acres of land, the equivalent of 60 football pitches, to Laings. However, finding the government starved them of cash for their council housing but gorged them with funds for private improvement, the council decided to promote private co-operatives. A number of areas have been encouraged with leaflets and stickers to form housing co-operatives and buy their house for £1.

Reading

★ Reading Tories have run into serious trouble with their shared ownership scheme. When they took power in May 1983 they decided that 105 houses, some of which were specially designed for the elderly, should be sold under the shared ownership scheme (where you pay part rent and part mortgage). However the schemes were so complicated that many of the houses have remained empty for almost 12 months. 60 of the houses have had to have a council mortgage because no building society would get involved in the legal complications.

Medway

★ Medway is to spend £15,000 organising a competition to encourage council house sales. The winner will have their mortgage paid off.

Wandsworth

★ Wandsworth is planning a 'more balanced community' on the Doddington estate by selling 122 maisonettes to be turned into 183 smaller units. They also plan to spend £75,000 on private cleaning contractors rather than increase local caretaking staff and to lease certain flats to local employers.

Nottingham

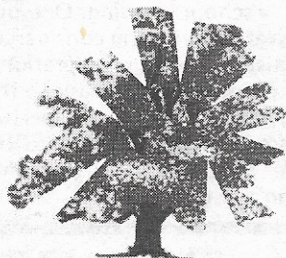
★ Nottingham City Council has decided to seek a 'judicial review' over the government's decision to force it to sell a 17 acre housing site. The government

originally threatened 7 Councils who held 9 sites with forced sales (see PSA 9). However 5 of these sites are either being developed or were incorrectly listed.

Darlington, Oldham, Sunderland and Nottingham have now been told they must sell some 38 acres, because the government says it will not be 'of serious detriment to the performance of their functions'. Nottingham Council is busy demolishing 'systems built' housing and is desperate for land. It says such a sale will have a serious effect on hundreds of people's housing opportunities.

Westminster

★ Wellesley House on the Ebury Bridge Estate is to be sold off. Westminster Council could have rehabilitated the 10 flats for rent to tenants in need but instead the site will be sold to private developers to build 26 flats for re-sale for at least £28,000 each. The council say that local tenants will be given priority to buy! The site is being sold very cheaply so that the developers can maximise their profits on the 'low' selling price of the flats.



BARRATT'S IN CRISIS

Barratt, UK leaders in buying up council land and refurbishing council estates for re-sale (see earlier PSAs) has lost £300 million from its capital value in the last year. To try and counter the nose-dive in share prices, the company is launching a new advertising campaign to upgrade its image in the wake of recent media exposés into company practices. Barratt could soon be the target of a takeover bid by another major housebuilding firm.

More Merton

HAWLEY EXPANDS

Merton council is planning to centralise many of its services in a newly acquired building, Crown House. On 22nd November its Central Services Committee decided to award the contract for cleaning the new offices to **Progressive Cleaning Services Ltd**, a Hawley Group company (see PSA 11). Another Hawley company, **Provincial** is already cleaning Merton schools (PSA 5). The Progressive tender price was only £2000 lower than the Works Staff Side proposal, in a contract worth some £50,000 a year.

There are currently 12 full time and 45 part time staff cleaning offices affected by the move to Crown House. Progressive has agreed to give priority to existing staff in recruitment, but there will be only 19 jobs initially, to be cut later to 12, with 2 supervisors. The company is offering a maximum of only 10 hours work a week (thus avoiding any responsibility for National Insurance payments, etc), no London Weighting, no sick pay (above statutory sick pay), no pension, and two weeks holiday a year. This may seem bad, but compares well with the lower **OCS** tender which was rejected by officers on the grounds that the company would not be able 'to provide and maintain cleaning to an acceptable standard... officers will be forced to devote an abnormally high amount of time to checking performance and that the termination of the Contract through lack of performance will result' (Cambridge DHA, please note.)

COMPUTER FIRMS

Two computer companies, **Hoskyns** (see PSA 11) and **Computel Ltd** of Gloucester recently submitted proposals to Merton Council for the contracting out of the Data Processing Division. The Chief Executive's comments on their proposals are worth noting and include: 'It is clear however that neither company has very much, if any, real experience in providing local authority computing services on the same scale and variety as those present and proposed within Merton.' He added '... there are many disadvantages which may outweigh the apparent financial attractions of privatisation'. Top of his list was: 'Staff hostility - (NALGO's) present policy of non-co-operation in relation to privatisation... if implemented... could literally halt the administration of the borough.'

• A third company, **Systemsolve (Computer Services) Ltd** of Feltham, Middx, also showed initial interest but did not submit proposals. All three firms were recommended by Deloitte Haskins & Sells (see PSA 11). More information from Geoff Patmore, NALGO, tel: 01-543 5986.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTION

Information

CONTRACTORS' FAILURES: THE PRIVATISATION EXPERIENCE

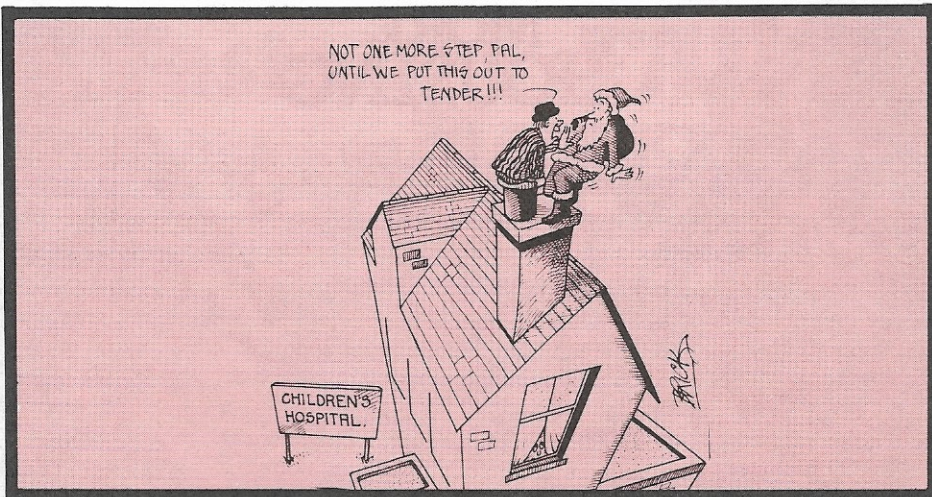
From the TUC comes this useful digest of reports on contractors' failures with some more detailed case studies, apparently compiled from press stories and labour movement publications. From: the TUC, Congress House, Great Russell St, London WC1. Price £2.

NUPE has produced a new leaflet on the failures of private contractors in local government. It gives a number of examples of failure, makes general points about what's wrong with privatisation, and encourages readers to campaign to defend public services. From: NUPE, Civic House, 20 Grand Depot Road, London SE18. Tel: 01-854 2244.

NHS UNLIMITED has produced another BRIEFING (no 16), with useful information about private practice within the NHS and recently revealed abuses, and a long informative article about the private sector's involvement in kidney transplants and dialysis. From: NHS Unlimited, c/o Frank Dobson MP, House of Commons, London SW1.

FIGHTING PRIVATISATION: A NALGO Campaign Guide for Districts and Branches. From NALGO, 1 Mableton Place, London WC1. Has many useful ideas on how to build a campaign including experience from Bury, Wandsworth and the Gas Showrooms campaign. Also sections on how to produce a good leaflet, press release, and getting more information.

SAVE WESTMINSTER'S SERVICES: a monthly 8-page bulletin on cuts and privatisation in Westminster. The last three issues have focussed on Housing, the NHS and Social Services. Copies available (send large SAE) from: SWS, 389b Harrow Road, London W9. Tel: 01-968 4454.



Coventry LABOUR SELL-OFF

Labour-controlled Coventry City Council are considering a 600 item hit list of services for cuts and privatisation.

A confidential 150-page report has been prepared by four teams of senior management and councillors in a bid to beat the council's workforce into submission to avoid ratecapping. It cynically states: 'On the one hand it may seem as the Tory party's dirty work but on the other hand; (a) It is likely to happen anyway; (b) There may be substantial savings; (c) It may be possible to persuade the workforce it is in their interest to start now to demonstrate their own efficiency. The process of persuasion may be extremely difficult but we would need to be prepared to go all the way.'

Proposals include selling off: ● airport land ● car parks ● golf courses ● allotments ● 20% of the museums' paintings ● residential homes for the elderly (complete with residents). ● coach station franchises. All Direct Labour services are under threat including: ● refuse collection ● street cleaning ● security ● vehicle cleansing ● school meals ● school cleaning. One option to full privatisation being considered also is '... Existing in-house operations could be set up on a trading basis so that they can compete and their performance compared.' Other 'savings' to be made include scrapping bonus schemes and banning overtime.

Unions to Organise Action

The unions were not formally consulted with over the major privatisation proposals and the Joint Shops Stewards Committee were invited to meet with management just days before the Council were due to discuss the report in secret session. Now the unions plan to organise a joint campaign to defend services. As we go to press the outcome of the Council meeting is not known. Contact: Nail McChesney, NALGO, 0203 25555 x 2937 or Joe Rogers, NUPE, 0203 25871.

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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Circulation: 12,000

Researched, designed and produced by: SCAT Publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (tel. 01-253 3627). A national housing, planning and public service project serving the labour movement.

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