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AN ANTI-PRIVATISATION NEWSLETTER FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

No. 13 FEB 1985

Barking **FIGHT GOES ON**

Workers Plan

The Worker's Plan for Barking Hospital was commissioned by the domestics' strike committee for the DHA's review of the cleaning contract in February 1985. It presents a challenge to the whole basis on which the Barking contract — and no doubt many others — was drawn up and awarded.

It contains detailed accounts of the experience of the domestics who worked in the hospital before April 1984 (when the new contract with its 41% cut in hours brought them out on strike) supported by an examination of the scientific evidence on hospital cleaning and of the DHSS circulars on standards. It argues that the basis for effective hospital cleaning is first to define the standards required, then to work out the hours needed and lastly to price the work.

The domestics' own accounts show that even before April 1984 they had too little time to do the job properly and all worked unpaid in their own time to complete jobs. They were constantly kept short of clean overalls and often had to supply their own cleaning materials.

The report concludes that the crucial factors for cleaning a hospital are time, elbow grease, care and commitment, and calls upon the DHA to employ direct labour, including the domestics currently on strike, to take over the cleaning and restore standards.



Philip Wolmuth

Crothall's domestic services contract at Barking Hospital is to continue — for the time being at least. Redbridge DHA met on the 5th February to consider Crothall's future but refused union demands for the contract to be terminated and brought in-house.

Although management admitted Crothall's failure they recommended to the DHA that the contract be renewed for another four years! Even some Tory DHA members such as Councillor Axon (ex Labour Party and now Chair of the DHA Competitive Tendering Working Party) was 'not happy with performance' but he added that 'there was no justification for a decision now'.

After three hours debate, an interim decision was reached: to ask the DHSS to independently monitor the contract. They also decided to review the situation — yet again — in March but Crothall's contract is to be allowed to run to its year end in April.

The Health Emergency spokesperson told PSA that given the DHSS's position on privatisation "it was impossible for them to be considered independent. In any event the last ten months catalogue of Crothall's failures is surely enough evidence for their contract to be terminated".

Over 150 strikers and supporters lobbied the DHA meeting, with trade unionists coming from as far away as Belfast in support. Despite the DHA decision a mass picket was held on 6th February and the strikers are committed to fighting on. A new programme of action is being planned. The strikers still need the fullest support possible from the labour movement. Contact: Strike Line on 01-592 5038.

Cont. on page 2

More News

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

Another cleaning firm with absolutely no NHS experience has picked up an NHS contract. **Berkeley-Taylorplan Ltd** have won a two-year domestic service contract worth £238,000 at St Mary's Hospital London. The inevitable job losses, pay and conditions cuts and deterioration in service start in May when the firm will try to carry out the service in only 2/3 of the time actually needed and with fewer staff. Paddington & North Kensington Health Authority say that 'the Company's international experience combined with the need to establish themselves in the British market would... ensure that the contract was successful and more than off-set the disadvantages of no NHS experience.'

Berkeley-Taylorplan Ltd's directors and shareholders are based in New South Wales, Australia and the company claims to have some 50 contracts in Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East and Europe. It is part of the Taylorplan network of catering companies based in the UK who are tendering for NHS contracts.

INITIALLY BAD

Within the first 48 hours of their laundry contract at West Lane Hospital in Middlesborough, **Initial Services** workers inadvertently threw away nurses underwear and health authority uniforms they were supposed to be washing. One of the workers has a job as a pest control officer in the mornings — and now works at the regional infectious diseases hospital in the afternoon.

● **County Cleaners** of Manchester who were awarded the contract to clean Huddersfield DHA offices to save the authority £500 a year, have proved so disastrous that the company has been struck off the authority's tendering list.

FROM PAGE 1

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

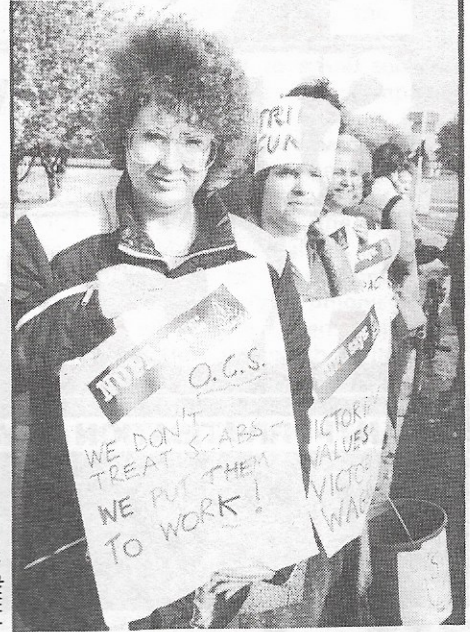
- It offers an alternative approach to challenging the whole process of tendering in the NHS.
- It offers positive proposals for a good service instead of a defensive stance based on current practice.
- It provides a mass of evidence in accessible form which can be used by domestics throughout the NHS who are fighting to maintain their jobs and the standards of their service.

The Plan was drawn up with the assistance of the Labour Research Department and the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems (CAITS). Copies of the Plan are available at £4 from Barking & Dagenham Link, 14 Porters Avenue, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 2AQ.

TWENTY Addenbrooke's WEEKS ON



Philip Wolmuth



Cleaners at Addenbrooke's hospital, now in the twentieth week of their strike, are undermining other privatisation plans in the Cambridge area whilst threatening the future of OCS Hospital Services in their hospital. PSA talked to trades unionists and strikers from NUPE and COHSE about their fight.

How did OCS get the contract?

Addenbrookes has always had private contractors working on 5-year contracts. Crothalls and New Chestertons have both held the contract. Last year it went out to tender. We demanded that unions be fully involved in drawing up specifications but management refused. There was disagreement amongst us whether to get involved in an in-house tender. Those in favour won the vote but NUPE made it very clear that they would take part in discussions but not necessarily accept findings.

How do you feel about in-house tenders now?

It may be one way of getting useful information but it's just a way of cutting your own throat. It became clear immediately that to stand any chance of winning the tender you had to make cuts. The District Administrator talked of Crothalls and New Chesterton being over-funded and over-staffed!

What action did you take before the contract was decided on?

Members just didn't believe a firm like OCS would arrive. They kept saying it can't happen here. So the women from Barking came up and we organised two one-day stoppages where we made members aware of what was happening in the rest of the country. A walk-out ten days before the contract was due to start produced concessions on Whitley rates of pay. It's very important also to lobby the Health Authority members — make sure they have read the specifications, especially the doctors and the professionals, make sure they know what it

means. The sisters on the ward had no idea what it could mean for them.

Briefly, what does working for OCS really mean?

They kept the hourly rate but abolished both pensions and sick pay schemes and cut back maximum holidays from five to three weeks. They abolished all bonus payments. They cut training back from five weeks to half an hour! With the best will in the world you can't fit 22½ hours work into ten hours, but that's what they wanted.

How's this affected those working these schedules?

After working that rate for two or three weeks you're exhausted and ready to leave. There's a lot of sickness. OCS are desperate for staff because there is such a high turnover, 200 staff have already left. They've leafletted large parts of Cambridge and have laid on buses from places 15 miles out of town trying to get staff.

What about the patients and overall hospital service?

Standards are appalling. You've heard of all the scandals about child labour. They attempt to patch things up with blitz cleans. But nurses and other staff are having to cover for all the work they don't do. You really need double the number of nurses now. There are patients collecting up trays, taking tea round, some going in the kitchens washing up. It might sound helpful but almost every one of those patients has an infection. A lot of our jobs involved helping patients — like getting a drink, or their specs or a paper — that patient care's gone. We know of patients being

told to 'get lost' now, as the cleaners are too overworked.

What happened on the first day of the contract?

Staff hadn't been told what OCS expected. They came in on Monday and were told. That day the strike began. We had supportive strike action from other groups, eg portering, stores, sterile supplies. However it costs a lot to support that level of action and now it is only cleaners who are on strike. However that doesn't mean we don't have moral and practical support from other sections, we certainly do.

How do you feel after 20 weeks on strike?

In any dispute you expect peaks and troughs. You'd expect a trough right now, but we haven't. Morale is high. We have a lot of support from within the hospital and from outside.

How have you built this support?

In many ways. We constantly speak at every sort of meeting, eg at trade union and Labour Party branches. We've spoken in places like St Albans, Peterborough, Bedford, Kings Lynn, London and St Ives. You name it we haven't missed a meeting yet. People who have never stood up before have been explaining our cause. We've produced a new leaflet and picketed every day. We've stopped some lorries like the post office and others but our emphasis in picketing has been in pushing out leaflets, informing and persuading. We want the support of patients, visitors and other staff.

We've held rallies and major meetings in town. A student theatre group has done a play and songs on what's happening. They're experts at doing one song in a hospital and disappearing before the security guards are called! We've got a caravan in the visitors' car park and we regularly get information and offers of support from other staff and from visitors. All this helps us keep up the local and national publicity.

What progress have you made so far?

A lot. The arguments about the issues are very clear, our support from within the hospital for us has never been greater. But we've also helped ditch other private contractors. For instance Norwich DHA accepted an in-house tender which was more expensive than other tenders from private contractors



Philip Wolmuth

because of the experience of Addenbrookes. Moreover tendering for catering in six hospital units have gone out in Cambridge, and many contractors have withdrawn as they are too worried about what might happen!

What is the situation now?

Despite national publicity exposing the contract and a health authority report which was very critical, they're still keeping OCS. They've just given the parent company until March 6th to present a plan of how they will sort it out. Despite the fact that OCS has consistently breached its contract.

What lessons are there for other campaigns?

● You have to convince people that it's not just a pay dispute. The key issues are cuts and the deterioration of the Health Service.

● It's not just a trade union issue, it's a community issue. All right, trade unions are leading the strike, but the quality of cleaning and care affects everyone.

● Don't be limited or 'conservative' about who you turn to for help and support, there's a lot of support out there if you can tap it.

● We've had excellent co-operation between COHSE and NUPE from the start. This is essential if you are to succeed

● Check the references of any tenderer. We found OCS had given references from places where they had been sacked!

● We've got good help from union officers but you need their resources and printing. You must demand facilities if they're not offered.

● Of course it's important to put in as much work as possible before the contract is decided. But once it's gone to a contractor, that's the time to step up the fight not pack it in.

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

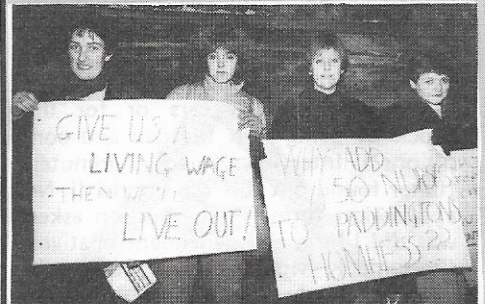
More News

● In Dudley NUPE has launched a new 'cockroach campaign' to involve the local community in its campaign against privatisation. 70,000 leaflets and posters have been produced concentrating on the impact of privatisation on the quality of services. Over a hundred workers and supporters were involved in a recent occupation of the DHA headquarters.

● Preston and Blackpool: trade union pressure on the DHAs has led to both authorities agreeing to withdraw from the tendering process altogether.

● Worcester: domestics at the Royal Infirmary backed by the local NUPE officer have succeeded in fighting off an attempt by their management to bring in cuts in pay, hours and bonus in preparing the in-house tender. A questionnaire given to the domestics aimed at securing their agreement to cuts met with such resistance that it had to be withdrawn.

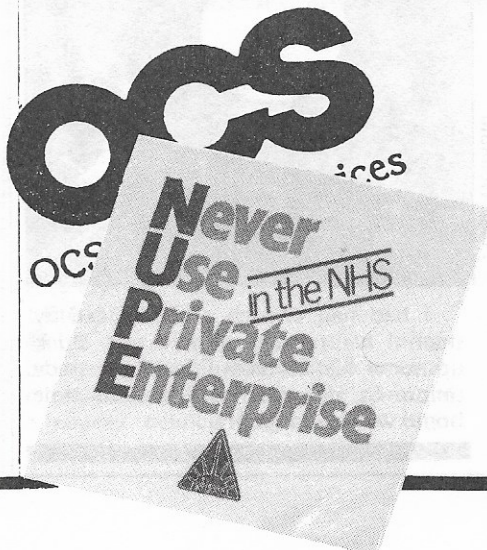
● Newcastle: health service unions have formed a joint union committee representing NUPE, COHSE, GMBATU, EPTU, UCATT, NALGO, RCN, RCM and the Society of Radiographers. The committee plans a programme of action to stop the whole tendering process, not simply to challenge one contract after another. There is to be a series of meetings with nurses over the next few weeks to win their support. On 25th January all the hospital ancillary workers in the DHA came out on strike for the day, while the DHA was making its first decision on tendering. The contract, for cleaning one hospital and the RHA offices was awarded in-house.



Philip Wolmuth

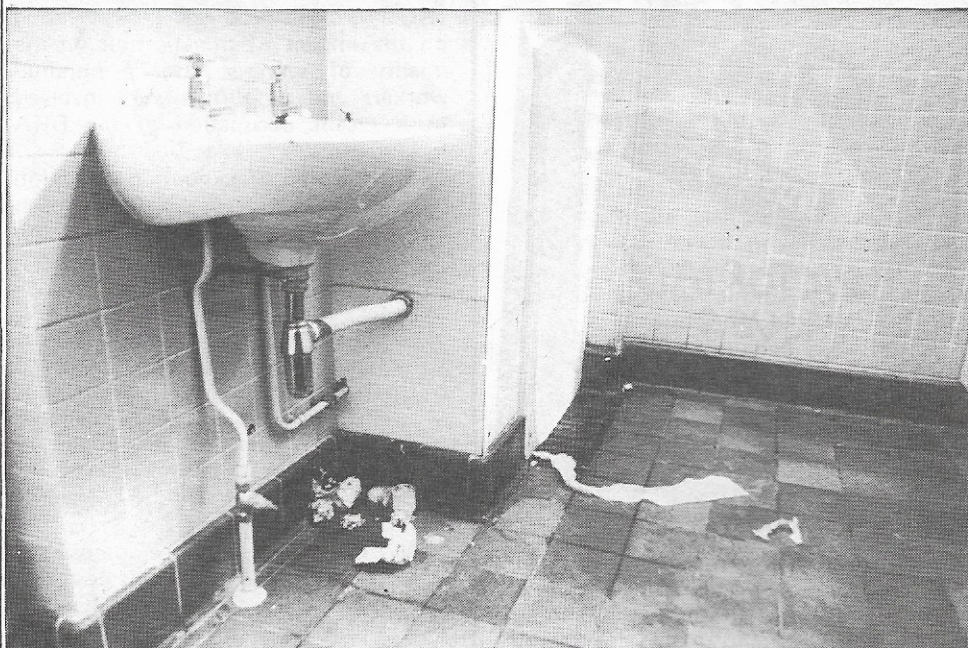
● An occupation by staff of the 30 bed Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre in Oxford to prevent the proposed closure of one third of its beds received wide local support and ended in victory. The DHA has now agreed to make no cuts until after a 3 month consultation period.

● At Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury COHSE members are challenging both the health authority and Crothalls over the failure to enforce standing orders covering the hospital cleaning contract. On 22nd January at a preliminary hearing, the COHSE branch Secretary was given leave to seek a judicial review in the High Court. Concern over Crothalls' performance has been supported by patients at the hospital who sent a petition to the local press complaining about the standard of cleaning on the wards.



St Helier Hospital

INFECTIOUS TIME BOMB...



Mediclean Ltd, a Hawley Group Company (see PSA 11) started their first major NHS cleaning contract on 13th January at the 583 bed St Helier Hospital Carshalton. A local person and ex-hospital administrator applied to Mediclean for a cleaning job at the hospital. We print below extracts from her diary which recorded her experiences.

Thursday 10th Jan. Spot the Mediclean advert in the local paper — part-time workers needed, no experience necessary as training will be given. Phoned for an interview and am told to attend next day.

Friday Jan. 11th. The interview was in a small hovel with a brusque young woman. I had to remove a stretcher to get into the room. (Do they need it for the overworked cleaners or for the shock of being told the pay and conditions?) Interview lasted 5 minutes. (Later found out this was standard). No application form. First question asked was did I have any dependent relatives. (Presumably women with young children or elderly relatives are unreliable and not given time off for family considerations.) Asked how I would get to work, if I was working and healthy. No reference asked for. The pay was £2.10 per hour (25% less than NHS rate).

Wednesday 16th Jan. Phoned to see if I got the job. They couldn't find my piece of paper.

Friday 18th Jan. Phoned again about the job. They still couldn't find the piece of paper but they asked if I had any cleaning experience. I told them yes. I was told to start the next day! (I had been hired by a company who had absolutely no details about me. Lump labour.)

Saturday 19th Jan. Reported for duty very punctually. The Mediclean office is in total chaos. I sit down surrounded by mounds of paper, half-worked-out schedules and hundreds of

clipboards. Women start to come in saying they are new today. No-one knows what is going on. Doreen Carpenter (Manager) is dashing around like a Roadrunner. Four wards are still not covered. Silverfish reported. No-one knows who is responsible for pest control. Silverfish spared from extermination by Mediclean.



Mediclean Limited

Taken up to my ward. It is chaos. A terrified cleaner greets us in the kitchen apologising (to the supervisor) for being an hour behind. She has never worked on a ward before. I can't believe that I am working on a maternity ward with no health check and no references.

No explanation given of the colour coding system which operates as a precaution against spreading infection. Nothing written and no-one from Mediclean around to ask so we just cleaned with the materials at hand. The day room looked like a pit. It's heavily used and not enough time has been allocated to clean it often enough.

My co-worker has been working since 7am and will still be here at 7pm. She was supposed to have a fifteen minute break in the canteen at 10. She was too terrified to sit down and have a cup of tea as she had been told that it was not allowed.

Monday 21st Jan. Meet Wendy (Assistant Domestic Manager) who is

directing the rotas. Still no mention of health check or training. Whisked downstairs to help with the 'infection'. Wendy's obviously nervous. On to the infected ward. There is one part-timer leaving at 11, one full-timer and a very full ward, mostly elderly. Wendy tells us about not using the toilet buckets in the patient areas. (It was the first the other two had heard about colour coding — amazing what an infection will do for training.) Wendy removes an offending bucket before the infection control officer can see it.

Shown the sluice to clean. There is a semi-full bedpan next to a bowl used for bedbaths mingled with vases. I clock out really not believing that a health authority could allow all this to happen.

Tuesday 21st Jan. Sent to yet another ward. Met someone newly employed who knew what to do. Told by a cleaner who had worked here for years — not by the Mediclean Training Officer. The machine team were buffing the floors. Nicked our mop to clean the clinical room (on a surgical ward). They hadn't been told about colour coding (despite being here since beginning of contract). They were using a toilet mop to clean the clinical examining room on a surgical ward. We were leaving at 12. There was no-one to take over. The machine team left but within two minutes one of them came back saying he had been told to come up and serve dinners.



I had had enough of Mediclean by then. I went back, clocked out, stuck up some leaflets about joining a trade union. St Helier is an infectious time bomb waiting to go off.

Philip Wolmuth

Philip Wolmuth



The government sold 51 per cent of British Telecom for £3.9 billion in November 1984. The shares were priced at 130p each but payment was phased over three years. At the end of the first day on the Stock Exchange the 50p shares were worth 93p. Since then they have been as high as 134.5p — a rise of 169 per cent. On this basis the government should have sold BT for £10.5 billion, a difference of £6.6 billion. This is equivalent to more than half the amount of money the government will have to borrow to balance its books this year. It amounts to one of the world's biggest ever asset stripping of public services.

The costs of selling BT have mounted steadily to £350m including £107.3m in fees to banks and stockbrokers for arranging this gigantic swindle. Other costs included advertising, telephone vouchers and free shares to employees. No sooner had BT been privatised than its chairperson, Sir George Jefferson, was given a 70 per cent salary increase to £160,000.

MORE to Come

The sale of public assets by nationalised industries and state owned companies is to be accelerated according to the government's recent White Paper on Public Expenditure 1985/86 to 1987/88. The government has set a target of £7 billion from asset sales over the next three years — a 93 per cent increase over income from sales in the last 3 years and a full £1 billion more than the government planned this time last year.

Over the next two years there will be further income from the sale of British Telecom as shareholders pay the last two instalments of their shares. This will amount to about £1.2 billion per annum. That still leaves a large amount to be found from selling other assets particularly in the third year 1987/88. It must also be remembered that the net income from sales is much smaller than the sale price because of fees and commissions to banks and stockbrokers and other sale costs. Nor does this take into account the government writing-off loans and debts.

The government has already committed itself to selling-off all the shares it still owns in companies which have already been privatised. In January 1985 it announced the sale of the remaining 48 per cent of shares in British Aerospace. That will still leave shares in BP, Britoil, and Cable and Wireless which are worth about £3 million. But selling these would greatly diminish the government's stake in the oil industry.

The government has already agreed to sell:

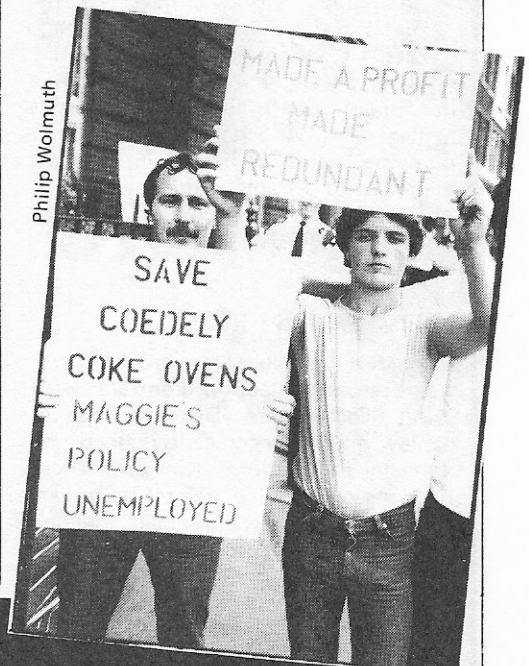
British Airways (the sale is delayed because there is yet no settlement over legal battles with Laker Airways receiver and other creditors);

Royal Ordnance Factories;
British Shipbuilders — warship and repair yards;
National Bus Company.

The combined income from these sales is unlikely to exceed £2 billion. This still leaves the following public assets and services which could be sold and would leave the public sector virtually totally asset stripped. The estimated potential 'market' value is based on the highest figure from various stockbrokers' analyses of asset sales.

British Airports Authority	£300m
British Gas	7800m
Post Office	1200
National Girobank	200m
British Leyland inc Land Rover and Unipart	1150
British Rail assets	735
British Nuclear Fuels	250
English Water Authorities	750
Rolls Royce	350
Electricity	4500
National Coal Board	?
British Steel subsidiaries	?

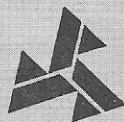
The sale of council houses and local authority building land is considered separately. Income from these sales has varied between £1465m and £1789m in the last three years as 494,200 dwellings were sold. In 1985/86 it is expected to be £1596m. No estimates are given in the White Paper for the following years although council house sales are expected to decline.



Private Pits

Further evidence that the government has secret plans to privatise Britain's pits (see PSA No. 10) has come from recent revelations on Tyneside. The Evening Chronicle on 29 January 1985 carried a report that Ned Smith, NCB Director of Industrial Relations, had revealed the privatisation plan at a meeting of ten senior managers at Graham House, the NCB's staff college in Longbenton in 1981. Smith told the two day strategy meeting that the liaison committee composed of NCB executives and Department of Energy officials had been informed in no uncertain terms that the government intended to privatise the coal industry.

In order to make the industry as attractive as possible for private capital the future lay with about 100 profit-making pits largely in the central coalfield, Smith said. One official at the meeting asked what would happen to coalfields in the North East, Wales and Scotland. He was told 'draw your own conclusions'. Increased incentives would be used to encourage more early retirement and redundancy. Pit closures on this scale could result in the loss of 100,000 jobs, more than halving the NCB's workforce and decimating communities.



WORKERS TAKE ON PRITCHARDS

The street cleaners employed by Pritchards on its notorious Wandsworth contract are organising to take on the company: 90% of the workforce has now joined the T&GWU, which is seeking recognition from Pritchards to negotiate on the workers' complaints:

- No pay rise in 3 years despite an inflation-proofed contract between the company and Wandsworth Council.
- A company policy of employing only boys under the age of 18, at £65 per week basic.
- Breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act, including failure to provide protective clothing.
- Failure to provide proper equipment: most of the machines formerly used are now out of order and some workers have to use metal shovels without handles and bits of wood to pick up refuse.

After an angry mass meeting earlier in January the union wrote again to management, who had agreed to recognise the union if it gained an 80% membership among the workforce. They are still waiting for a reply. Contact T&GWU 01-703 4228.

PRITCHARDS FINED

Pritchards have been in trouble over their refuse collection contract with South Oxfordshire District Council. Henley magistrates recently fined the company £8,500 for a series of offences involving overloading their refuse trucks. Pritchards however only paid the fine after receiving a court order.

PROFITS SECURE

Securiguard Group, the security/cleaning contractors made record profits of £821,000 for the year to 28th October 1984. Turnover increased by 65% to £12.4 million. 70% of the group's business is in security and in recent years a number of companies have been taken over; another large company will soon be added. The cleaning division's profits — hit by Academy Cleaning being sacked by Merton Council (see PSA6) only 'marginally increased' but Securiguard expect to take a larger share of the market "when conditions improve". Presumably when the stock market — and local authorities — forget about the Merton fiasco.

SUSPECT FIRM MOVES

Contractors &

The UK subsidiary of ARA Services Inc, a large multinational which has faced a string of law suits and investigations in America, is poised to get a Wandsworth Council catering contract for the borough's homes for the elderly.

The decision to award the contract to ARA Food Services, (the social services department's tender was a close second out of eight bids), was recently thwarted by the council's Joint Shop Stewards Committee, who revealed ARA's past history documented in a number of reports and newspapers. The Social Services Committee meeting was thrown into confusion, adjourned, and then it announced that the council would carry out its own investigation of the company for the next meeting in February.

ARA Services Inc operates the third largest chain of private nursing homes in North America. It is highly unlikely to be content simply providing meals to homes in Wandsworth — the council has already sold one home for the elderly complete with residents and is about to sell another. ARA ranks second to ServiceMaster in operating hospital ancillary contracts in America. Its British subsidiary is seeking NHS contracts. In the USA, ARA also has extensive operations in school meals, catering in public facilities (including prisons), school bus and social services transport, vehicle maintenance and has recently expanded in private nurseries and day care centres.

The firm also operates a large number of vending machines across America. It is these operations which have had alleged links with organised crime. ARA has admitted making illegal payments totalling \$393,000 to politicians and others in the US and abroad in the 1970s. It has been fined by the Federal government for price fixing, and its nursing homes have been closed and fined for deficiencies in patient care. (Full details in the NUPE/SCAT North American Dossier — see back page.) Wandsworth's Director of Social Services claimed in the report recommending ARA that he had 'been impressed by their expertise and professional approach'.

The council have tried to argue that the Reading based firm is completely

IN



Philip Wolmuth

separate from its US parent company and that all its illegal activities are not relevant in Britain. However, the four directors of ARA Food Services are four directors from the American company including ARA Services Inc chairperson Joseph Neubauer. In December last year senior officials together with other investors succeeded in a management buy-out of the company which had over \$3 billion turnover in 1983.

In Britain ARA Food Services had £49.6m turnover in 1983 — up 28.3 per cent on the previous year. The firm has contracts with a number of Crown Courts, Westminster City Council, British Gas, two police colleges and several other authorities. Further information on ARA contracts is needed. Please contact Mick French, T.U.-side Secretary, Putney Baths, Dryburgh Road, London SW15. (Tel: 01-788 7113)

ANOTHER AMERICAN HOSPITAL FIRM MOVES IN

The British private hospital assets of United Medical Enterprises, previously part of the National Enterprise Board but sold off to the London and Northern Group in 1983, have now been sold to National Medical Enterprises (NME) for £9.95m. NME, the fourth largest private

hospital operator and the second largest chain of nursing homes in the USA, takes over the Alexandra Hospital, Maidstone, a new private hospital nearing completion in Halifax, two hospital sites in Bristol and Cheshire, and management contracts at two London hospitals.

& Consultants



Following our report on multinational management consultants **Hay-MSL** in PSA 10, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees has sent us the following comments on Hay's US activities:

- ... as they work for management, the results of their work reflect management values.
- Their system... grants undue weight to supervision and visceral responsibility as opposed to human care duties or heavy, stressful manual labour.
- They... downgrade responsibility for the care of people and upgrade the responsibility for the care of property.
- ... the results of their work are often detrimental to management/union relations.
- Their recommendations... most often have the effect of raising the salaries of executive and managerial employees while lowering the salaries and status of clerical and blue collar workers.

£ £ £

- **Hay-MSL** have been commissioned by Merton Council (cost £22,000) to report on cuts that can be made to the Education Department. NALGO are considering what action to take.



Taskmasters' depot in Merton. They don't even collect the rubbish from outside their own front door! They are currently being fined up to £1,500 per week for contract failure.

WHO CLEANS THE CLEANERS

A new cleaner started work at the **Hawley Group's** Slough offices on 14th January. The woman is being paid £17 for a 7½ hour week. Even Hawley won't employ one of its own companies to clean its offices!

Kent ANDMARC EXPOSED

Ms M. Horwood was a cleaner employed by **Andmarc** cleaning contractors on its Kent County Council school cleaning contract until January 1985 when she resigned. This is her letter quitting the job which she sent to the headmaster, chairperson of the County Council Education Committee, the Swanley School governors, and to **Andmarc's** Regional Contracts Manager.

I am writing to formally tender my notice and inform you that I will not be working for your company after the 8th February 1985 and would appreciate it if you could arrange for me to pick up all my outstanding pay before I leave work on the 8th February 1985.

I feel I must take this opportunity to give my reasons for leaving, when your company took over I got lower hourly rate, less hours work a week, no holiday pay, no sick pay and only half my normal hours on the weeks the children are off school. I reluctantly accepted this because of my loyalty to the school, however, I have now had to take a further cut in hours and my pay has never been a constant amount, my pay-slips have never informed me of the hours I have worked and some weeks I have had National Insurance stopped and some weeks I have not. I have been unable to work out whether my money has been right and my supervisor has no more idea about how I am paid than I have. On top of all this, the equipment supplied to do my job are of inferior quality to that supplied by the K.C.C. Plus we are expected to work with less staff working less hours. The fluid for cleaning floors does not remove the dirt properly and does not leave a shine, and we are now required to work without electrical floor polishers, which obviously means we need to spend more time on each room but are unable to because of less staff and hours. I would go so far as to say that if the school cleaning is not improved by increasing staff and equipment it will not be long before this school becomes a health hazard and breeding place for germs and lice.

Ms. M. Horwood
29 January 1985

Contract Rejects

Powys Health Authority recently rejected privatisation of its domestic services in favour of an in-house tender (which itself cut hours and jobs). Officers' comments on the companies that tendered should be noted by other Health Authorities:

Crothall, Hospital Hygiene & Reckitts: rejected for 'a variety of reasons' including;

- 'lack of absence cover.'
- 'unacceptably high work performance (ie could not be attained and sustained).'
- 'bad record of industrial relations with other Health Authorities.'



Exclusive;

- 'lack of information... made it impossible to evaluate...'
- 'lack of absence cover.'
- 'discrepancy of 40 hours between workload calculated and rotas submitted for which no satisfactory explanation could be given.'

- 'generally the tenderer did not inspire confidence in his ability to fulfil the tender requirements.'

HHS *Service with Care*

Hospital Hygiene;

- 'their history of cleaning in the hospital environment is limited to a few months experience only.'
- 'the work performance expected of the staff under the conditions imposed... was unacceptable.'

Mediclean;

- 'their experience is... very limited and it is not possible to assess their performance.'
- 'their tender requires an increase in staff output of 13% with a drop in hourly earnings of 15% gross.'



Keep the Cowboys Out!

PRIVATE POISON



Philip Wolmuth

Colin Robertson, a Westminster City Council gardener writes:

Faced with budget cuts and the threat of privatisation, local authority management of parks, open spaces, playing fields and cemeteries are forced into an ever-increasing use of chemical aids in the fight to retain acceptable standards of maintenance with reduced numbers of staff.

The use of chemicals as an aid to the control of nature is nothing new and neither is the knowledge that their use can, and does, present serious risks to health.

The explosion and resulting 'dioxin contamination' at Seveso in Italy, where 245T was manufactured, and the recent disaster at the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal are but two in a long string of such accidents. In many cases the manufacture of certain products has been 'exported' to third world countries as they present an unacceptable level of risk for home manufacture.

Equally, evidence exists showing clear connections between exposure while spraying herbicides and pesticides and subsequent sickness, ranging from skin complaints to increased incidence of cancer tumours, still births, and genetic damage among workers and their families.

No control

Despite the human evidence, often backed up by conclusive laboratory findings as to the carcinogenicity and the mutagenicity of such products as 245T, the present system of Government control through the Ministry of Agriculture's Pesticide Advisory Committee has consistently failed to respond.

In addition to using 'hormonal' selective weedkillers, such as 2,4-D and MCPA, which are again proven carcinogens and mutagens, many authorities are introducing the use of growth retardants, again acting on plant hormones, as a means to reducing the frequency of hedge trimming and the mowing of certain types of grassed areas. International medical opinion calls for the need for further research,

but on the ground 'innocent till proved guilty' is the practice. And 'guilt' implies a line-up of victims!

Local authority gardeners and groundsmen are increasingly being asked to don their 'Space Suit' type protective clothing knowing that it provides but a reduction in risk — that as with asbestos, there are no safe levels of exposure to carcinogens.

Privatisation damages health

Meanwhile, as more local and education authorities privatise the maintenance of estates, open spaces, school grounds etc, contractors using the minimum number of workers will doubtlessly increase the use of hazardous chemicals in a desperate attempt to 'maintain standards': but at what cost to workers' and users' health?

Hammersmith FLEET OUT

Tory-controlled Hammersmith and Fulham Council has privatised its entire fleet of 300 vehicles including refuse trucks and meals on wheels vans. Transport firm Mitchell Cotts Ltd has won a 5 year contract to control all aspects of the operation, fuelling, maintenance and replacement of all council vehicles. Over 50 DLO jobs have been lost so far with more to follow. Meanwhile, the council's attempt to make savings through privatisation has cost an extra £880,000 through mismanagement.

Westminster NEW THREATS

Westminster City Council's bid to stop any attempt by NALGO to fight the council's cuts and privatisation policies has been stepped up recently. Following a joint trade unions/community organisations campaign against library closures which included an occupation of a library, the council have proposed amending the staff Disciplinary Code to make the following an offence: (i) 'Action taken by an individual(s) whether during working hours or otherwise and whether relevant to his (sic) normal duties or not, which frustrate the execution of Council policies.'

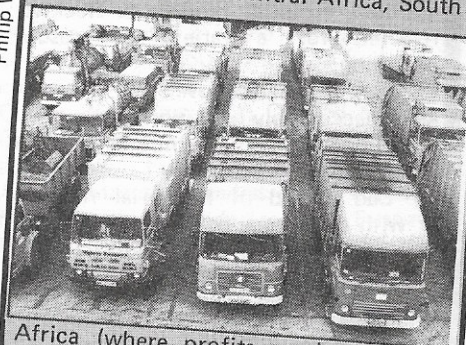
(ii) 'Occupying and/or remaining in occupation of premises owned by or leased to the City Council (other than in the course of normal duties) without express permission and/or having been instructed to leave.'

Westminster NALGO are concerned over the far-reaching implications of the council's manoeuvre and are taking legal advice while considering their response. Contact: Westminster NALGO 01-828 8070 x 2389.

Multinational LINK

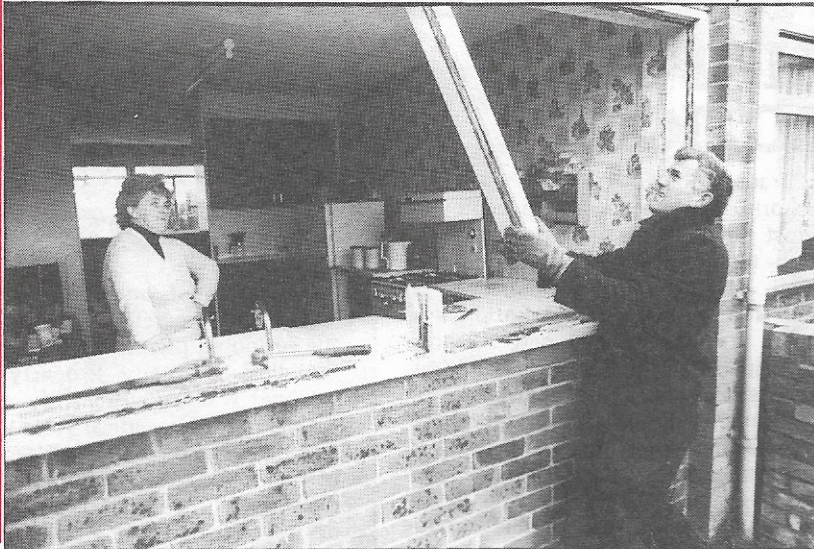
What do the privatisation of Hammersmith Council's vehicle fleet and the threat to local authority gardeners' safety have in common? Mitchell Cotts PLC. Mitchell Cotts is a multinational company with interests including transportation, engineering, tea plantations and chemicals. The group has over 180 companies operating in Europe, East and Central Africa, South

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Africa (where profits are 'particularly good', North and South America, Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong. This year's profits are expected to be £15 million. The company has also just negotiated £2.6 million compensation from the Ethiopian Government for a tea plantation company that was nationalised in 1975. MC Chemicals makes the ingredients for pesticides.

Medway DLO TO GO



Philip Wolmuth

A week before Christmas 1984 Rochester upon Medway City Council decided to close down their building maintenance Direct Labour organisation making 64 workers redundant. A month earlier the DLO had been congratulated on its performance. The decision to close means that the council will have to spend £511,000 more each year for the same work to be done by private contractors.

NUPE, UCATT, TGWU and the EPTU immediately formed a Joint Trade Union Action Committee to fight the closure. Already over 1000 tenants have signed a petition opposing the council's decision. Two half-day strikes were held early in February and support is being sought from other council departments. A report on the refuse collection service is currently being prepared by the council.

Further information: Joint Trade Union Action Committee, c/o TGWU offices, 5A New Road Avenue, Chatham, Kent.



Rich Pickings For Building Societies

In PSA 10 we reported on how the *Abbey National Building Society* was making a killing in Westminster. The *Nationwide Building Society* is also propping up the Government's push for owner-occupation at any price. A new company, *Nationwide Housing Trust Ltd* has been formed to purchase land from local authorities very cheaply. Houses and flats are being built for sale (sometimes in partnership with big property companies) and potential buyers can take advantage of Nationwide mortgages. What was once public land is now being used for private profit while council house waiting lists continue to grow.

BRISTOL

● 272 units, 126 of which will be sold on a cost-sale basis to council nominees. 30 flats will be handed over to the City Council in part payment for the site at Baltic Wharf.

GLASGOW

● 98 units built for cost-sale at Cowcaddens on land purchased from the City Council.

LEIGH-ON-SEA

● 56 units built for sale at prices between £21,500 and £28,500 to council nominees. The site formerly housed a county council transport and high-ways depot.

CARDIFF

● 89 units built at Sweldon Farm for cost-sale at prices between £17,000 and £25,400 to council nominees.

GOSPORT

● 81 units built for sale to the elderly and council nominees at prices between £19,250 and £25,000. The site is a dis-used railway yard purchased from the council.

SWANSEA

● 195 units for sale financed jointly by the Halifax Building Society. The 3.3 acre site, now called 'Maritime Village' has been purchased from the council.



COVENTRY

● 36 units for sale to people aged 55 and over on a 2.2 acre site purchased from Coventry City Council.

NANTWICH

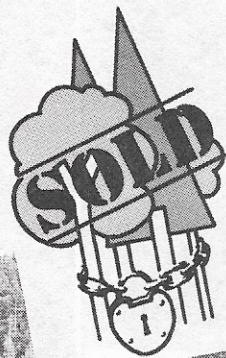
● 51 units bought for sale to the elderly at prices between £23,000 and £29,000. Land purchased from Nantwich Council.

SWINDON

● 65 units built for sale at prices between £16,085 and £23,212. Land purchased from Thamesdown Borough Council who can nominate buyers from their housing waiting list.

DUNDEE

● 125 units built for sale on the 5½ acre Cobden St. site purchased from the council who have some nomination rights for buyers.



CIVIL SERVICE UNDER ATTACK

AIRPORT ACTION

The trade unions in the British Airports Authority are engaged in a campaign against government privatisation plans, which threaten any chance of an integrated national airports policy. The BAA is a profitable organisation and has in the past funded new developments such as Terminal 4 at Heathrow from its own resources. However new developments now planned at Stansted and elsewhere will require a level of investment beyond its own resources, and the Government is likely to be looking to the private sector for the necessary funds. The unions' campaign has so far centred on warning members of the threat to jobs and conditions of service and on informing MPs of the disastrous consequences of breaking up the authority.

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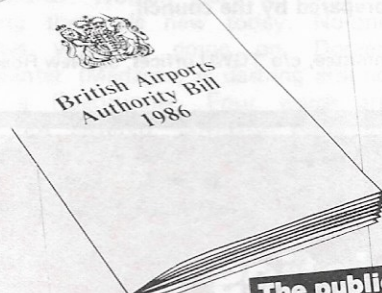
Forests

The Forestry Commission trade unions are planning to step up their campaign against forest sales. Ever increasing government sales targets and indiscriminate sales at giveaway prices (see PSA 11 & 12) carry continuing threats to vital national assets, to forestry jobs and to public rights of access to the countryside. The Joint Trade Union Committee is seeking to broaden support for their campaign to save what is left of Commission land. They are asking for support from trade unions and other organisations. Posters, leaflets and stickers and petition forms are available from: **Ted Radford, TU Side Secretary, Forestry Commission, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT.**

and SEEDS

The National Seed Development Organisation near Cambridge is responsible for marketing the results of plant breeding research and development carried out by the Agriculture and Food Research Institutes. Among its major achievements is the development of research on winter wheat which has enabled Britain to become a net exporter of grain after two centuries. The profits, currently some £2.8million a year, are used to finance research programmes, and make the NSDO an obvious target for privatisation. Private plant breeding firms are pressing the government to take some action. If they succeed, the unprofitable parts of the research programme will inevitably suffer as this will have no appeal for the new owners.

Who would pay for
this bill?



The public
The tax-payer
YOU

British Airports Authority
Combined Trade Union Side

AIR CUTS

Three hundred jobs are threatened by the proposed privatisation of the 7 Scottish Highlands and Islands aerodromes which provide vital community services such as the 24 hour air ambulance. While public services such as the ambulance are essential they are not very profitable and could be lost altogether if the sale goes through. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) unions have launched an anti-privatisation campaign involving users of the aerodromes and community groups.

● Manchester Airport, which is run by Manchester Council, has kept its air traffic control service in the hands of the CAA. The CAA however cut 50 jobs in order to compete with a tender from **International Air Radio Ltd.** No consultation with the unions took place over the cuts.

Crown Suppliers

A confidential memo from Patrick Jenkin to Margaret Thatcher concerning the proposed privatisation of the Crown Suppliers (formerly Property Services Agency) was leaked recently. 'They are embarked on a radical review of their internal systems and are determined to offer an effective and attractive service. We should... consider the practicability of transferring all or part of the operation to the private sector,' it said.

CS provides furnishings, heating fuel and transport to Government departments and other parts of the public sector. Its annual turnover exceeds £210 million and is extremely profitable. Since 1976 the workforce has been cut from 4,100 to under 2,000 and management tactics have severely undermined the unions as part of the lead up to full privatisation. The in-house transport operation has already been hived off to **National Carriers** following a feasibility study commissioned from... **National Carriers!** The company's performance however is inadequate and there have been many complaints. **National Carriers** do not have enough properly equipped depots in the right places nor are they familiar with the clients' specialist needs.

● Civil Service unions at the British Council are opposing management plans to make cuts and privatise services. The Council provides cultural and educational services to Third World countries: library and media services are immediately under threat with a possible loss of thirty-five jobs. The unions have set up an anti-privatisation action committee — contact: Helen Young or Norina O'Hare on 01-499 8011 x 3282.

PRIVATE PAY

Consultants Cooper and Lybrand, currently at work in many areas of central government (See PSA 11), have produced the first proposals for privatising a major part of a government department. Defence Secretary Heseltine is considering their report on the MOD civilian payroll operation, and informal discussions have already taken place with three major computer companies: **Baric**, an ICL subsidiary, **Safe Computing** and **SIA**. Several hundred clerical and computer jobs are at risk.

ILEA School Meals Plan

The Inner London Education Authority has announced a major programme to make school meals healthier and more attractive. At a time when other education authorities are reducing the standard of school meals through privatisation and cuts, the ILEA's initiative is an important one.

ILEA schools serve some of the poorest parts of the country; more than one-third of the children are eligible for free meals but many parents do not take them up. While many children who do not qualify still find the meals too expensive, some 79% of primary school-children and 55% of secondary school-children have a good midday meal.

The ILEA's main proposals include:

- Introduction of nutrition guidelines laid down by the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education which reduce fat and sugar content and increase dietary fibre.
- Enrichment of school menus for all children especially taking into account the needs of ethnic minority groups.
- A performance review of the catering operation.
- Better presentation, publicity and marketing of school meals.
- Nutrition education guidelines for teachers to be published.
- Co-operation by school governors, parents, catering staff, teachers and pupils to make lunchtime a relaxing



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part of the school day.

- Videos and multi-media programmes to help change parents' attitudes to eating and diet.

Wandsworth

ESTATE FOR SALE

Wandsworth Council has put the Livingstone Estate up for sale. In 1983 the tenants started campaigning to have lethal asbestos removed from their flats. The council's response was to remove the tenants instead, and after 18 months the 388 flats are lying empty. The council is looking for a big company to take on the whole estate as a package for re-sale as luxury flats, as Regalian Ltd did with the St Johns Estate, converting it speedily and profitably into Battersea Village. Wandsworth Council has a massive waiting list for council housing to rent.

STOP PRESS

As we go to press the Government are expected to publish a consultation document outlining plans to force local authorities to put services out to tender. Apparently 'anybody with an interest' will be able to submit a response to the document within a prescribed time. Copies of the document can be obtained from the Local Government Unit, Department of the Environment, Marsham Street, London, SW1.



More News

TSB HIVE-OFF

The proposed sale of the Trustee Savings Bank (TSB) will, according to the New Statesman, be 'one of the most audacious coups of all time . . . dispossessing the bank's 6 million customers of their bank.' The TSB has historically served working class communities, putting customers' needs before profits. While being one of Britain's largest banks it is unique in that its ownership has so far remained outside the control of the City. The Trustees and successive Labour governments have, however, failed to secure its position as a 'peoples bank' and so the Government are taking the opportunity to ensure that the bank's assets and potential massive profits finally fall into the hands of the City institutions.

SALE OF NEW TOWN STOPPED BUT . . .

Redditch Development Corporations plan to sell off £40m worth of commercial property and development land to a single purchaser has been stopped by the Department of the Environment. The Corporation had been planning to sell the assets to either the Harbison Group of the USA or to a consortium led by Tarmac. The Commission for the New Towns will take over all the Corporation's assets in April when it is wound up. It is expected to sell off the property bit by bit over a 3 to 4 year period.

PRIVATE BUS STOPS

Torquay Travel, a private bus company operating under an experimental de-regulation trial in Torquay has quit after carrying just 3 passengers in 3 weeks! The municipal bus continues to successfully operate the route.

NORWICH DHA CAVES IN

The success of the in-house tender for the domestic services in 3 Norwich hospitals was shortlived. After junior health minister John Patten threatened a government directive forcing the DHA to accept one of the private tenders, a special meeting of the authority of 29th January reversed their previous decision and awarded the contract to Reckitt Cleaning Services Ltd. 250 trade unionists who arrived to lobby the meeting were refused entry while DHA members voted 10-4, in secret, to privatise. Tory members who changed their vote declared that they still believed their original decision to have been right, but they felt obliged to give in to government pressure. It was clear that they had been 'leaned on' reported a Labour member.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTION Information

CLEANING UP? critical profile of the Hawley Group, a multinational which through its Mediclean, Provincial, Progressive & Taskmasters subsidiaries, is winning NHS, central and local government contracts. Copies 40p each. bulk rates available. **From: SCAT Publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1.**

NORTH AMERICAN DOSSIER: Fines and Failures of Big Business Control of Hospitals and Nursing Homes: A joint NUPE/SCAT publication from NUPE, 20 Grand Depot Road, London SE18. Detailed evidence of fines and failures of private nursing homes and private hospitals in America and Canada. Shows how large multinational firms — Hospital Corporation of America, ARA Services, Beverley Enterprises etc — many of whom now operate in Britain, have aggressively acquired smaller homes and hospitals to squeeze out competition. Also details the activities of British-based firms like Grand Metropolitan and Pritchard Services in privatised health care in North America.

DIRTY, DISGRACEFUL & DISGUSTING: describes the total failure of privatisation of school/college cleaning in East Sussex and elsewhere in the country. Excellent material for anti-privatisation campaigns. Produced by 6 East Sussex trade unions. **Copies from: NUPE, 40 Springfield Road, Crawley, West Sussex. Tel: 0293 33466/36427.**

DLOs DO IT BETTER! outlines Sheffield Works Dept.'s activities, produced as part of campaign against private contractors. **Copies from: Employment Dept., Sheffield Council, Palatine Chambers, Pinstone Street, Sheffield 1.**

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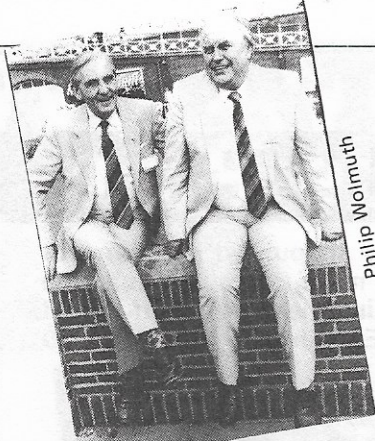
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Circulation: 12,000



Philip Wolmuth

THE FUTURE OF NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES: TUC Discussion Paper.

Free from TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. This report marks the start of a wide-ranging review of the TUC's policy on the future of nationalised industries as part of its campaign against privatisation. A policy statement will be presented to the 1985 TUC Congress in the autumn. The paper raises four key questions: What criteria and priorities should be used to decide which companies/industries are taken into public ownership — particularly those sold by the Tories? What type of public ownership is most suitable in each case? What kind of public accountability and control should apply to nationalised industries? What are the industrial democracy objectives for the nationalised industries? It is vital that these fundamental issues are fully debated and real alternatives developed. It is equally important that the limitations and flaws in schemes for social ownership, worker shareholders etc. are fully exposed.

CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT: 9th & 10th March 1985 at the City University, London EC1. Organised by the GLC as part of International Women's Day week of activities, to discuss local council action and women's jobs. Details from 01 633 4613 or Room 8, GLC, County Hall, London SE1.

LONDON HEALTH EMERGENCY CONFERENCE & AGM on health cuts & privatisation. Saturday March 16th, 11am-4pm, GLC, County Hall, London SE1. Disabled access. Details from: LHE, 01-833 3020.

TRANSNATIONALS INFORMATION

Set up by the GLC six months ago to look at how Londoners' lives are affected by multinationals, the Transnationals Information Centre London (TICL) has decided to spend some of its time looking at the companies moving in on the NHS.

Multinationals like Pritchards, Hawley and Brengreen will be the subject of two one-day workshops organised by TICL and sponsored by the GLC for the end of March. The aim is to review the information on these companies, bringing together trade unionists and activists who have been collecting this information, so that those involved in campaigns against privatisation can get an idea of the resources available. The other objective is to work out the most effective ways this information can be used, particularly by developing international contacts with workers' organisations.

The only way to control multinationals is through international solidarity action. This sort of action is still in its early days as far as health service workers are concerned. TICL is working with trade unionists and community service groups on building these links. If you are interested in participating in the workshops get in touch with TICL, Octavia House, 54 Ayres Street, London SE1; Tel. 01-403 7550.

• Workshops 16th and 23rd March at London New Technology Building, Pentonville Way, London NW1.

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.

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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