

FREEDOM CONTACTS

International

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales
Black Ram, P.O. Box 238, DARLINGHURST, NSW 2010
Disintegrator! P.O. Box 291, BONDI JUNCTION, Sydney
Sydney Anarcho-Syndicalists, Jura Books Collective, 417 King Street, NEWTOWN, NSW 2042
Sydney Libertarians, P.O. Box 24, DARLINGHURST, NSW 2010

Queensland

Libertarian Socialist Organisation, PO Box 268, Mount Gravatt, Central 4122
Self-Management Organisation, P O Box 332, North Quay

Victoria

La Trobe Libertarian Socialists, c/o SRC, La Trobe University, BUNDOORA, Vic. 3083
Monash Anarchist Society, c/o Monash University, Clayton, 3168 Melbourne
Libertarian Workers for a Self-Managed Society, PO Box 20, Parkville, 3052

South Australia

Adelaide Anarchists, PO Box 67, North Adelaide 5006

Western Australia

Freedom Collective, P O Box 14, Mount Hawthorn 6018

Tasmania

c/o 34 Kennedy Street, Launceston, 7250

NEW ZEALAND

P.O. Box 2042, Auckland
P.O. Box 22-607 Christchurch
Daybreak Bookshop, PO Box 5424, Dunedin

CANADA

Open Road, Box 6135, Station G, VANCOUVER, B.C.

U. S. A.

Arizona

Malicious Hooligans (anti-nuclear group) 1110 W. 2nd St., Tempe, AZ 85281

California

Autonomia (formerly Free Socialist) PO Box 1751, San Francisco CA 94101
Libertarian Anarchist Coffeehouse, last Sunday every month 7 pm at Cafe Commons, 3161 Mission St., S.F.

Minnesota

Soil of Liberty, Box 7056 Powderhorn Station, Minneapolis, Minn. 55407

Missouri

Columbia Anarchist League, PO Box 380, Columbia, Missouri 65201

New York

Libertarian Book Club, Box 842, GPO NEW YORK, NY 10012
SRAF/Freespace Alternative U, 339 Lafayette St., New York City, NY 10012

Texas

Houston SRAF, South Post Oak Station, P O Box 35253, Houston, TX 77035

WESTERN EUROPE

Federal Republic of Germany

Baden: Karin Bauer, Infö-Buro, Postfach 161, Schwäbisch Hall.
Anarkistisches Bund, publ. of 'anarkistische texte' c/o Gebr. Schmuck, c/o Libertad Verlag, Postfach 143, 1000 Berlin 44
Libertares Forum, Postfach 100755, 1000 BERLIN 36
East Westfalia: Anarchistische Föderation Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Wolfgang Fabisch, c/o Wohngemeinschaft Schwarzwurzel, Wöhrener Str. 138, 4970 Bad Oeynhausen 2
Hamburg Initiative Freie Arbeiter Union (anarcho-syndicalists: FAU, Repsoldstr. 49, Hochpaterre links, 2000 Hamburg 1
'Gewaltfreie Aktion' groups throughout FRG, associated with WRI. For info. write Karl-Heinz Sang, Methfesselstr. 69, 2000 Hamburg 19

France

Fédération anarchiste française, 3 rue Ternaux, 75011 Paris. (Groups throughout France).

Italy

Rome: Gruppo Hem Day, c/o Giovanni Trapani, via A. Tittoni 5, 00153 Roma

The Netherlands

De Vrije Socialist, Postbus 411, Utrecht

SCANDINAVIA

Denmark

Regnbuen Anarkist Bogcafe, Mejlgade 48, 8000 Aarhus
Anarkist-Syndicalist Bogcafe, Studiestræde 18, 1455 Copenhagen
Rainbow Anarchists of the Free City of Christiania, c/o Allan Anarchos, Tinghuset, Fristaden Christiania, 1407 K Copenhagen

Sweden

Frihetligt Forum, Landsvagsatan 19, 41304 Göteborg
Frihetligt Forum and Revolutionära Anarchisters Organisation - both at Box 110 75, 10061 Stockholm 11.

Desires

Accommodation Lady requires furnished room in Leyton, Leytonstone, Walthamstow or Wanstead. Box C c/o FREEDOM.

South-east London. Vegetarian anarchist wants to establish group and organize accommodation with others.

P. Stone, c/o FREEDOM.

Would any anarchists in North London who would like to form a group contact Alan via FREEDOM

Anyone in Wandsworth/Battersea/Clapham interested in forming anarchist group contact D. Elder, 28 Swanage Road, Wandsworth SW18.

Anarchists/Libertarians in Bushey/Watford area who would like to make contact & perhaps group please get in touch with Roger Little, 23 Lambert Court, Bushey Grove Road, Bushey.

Freedom Press

IN ANGEL ALLEY
84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH ST.
LONDON E.1

Meetings

The Polytechnic of North London Anarchist Society are running a series of speakers and films over the next 6 months. All events will be taking place at the PNL, Kentish Town building in Prince of Wales Rd, Kentish Town NW5. For details ring 607-2789 and ask for Jon Simcock c/o Kentish Town Students Union office.

Sunday 2 December Animal activists and vegetarians are organising a protest against Factory Farming and Animal Exploitation for the opening of the Royal Smithfield Show. Meet Speakers Corner, Hyde Park at 9.30 am. and march to Earls Court.

Tuesday 4 December STRIKE TACTICS: Going on strike involves a lot more than just walking out of the gate. Discussion organised by London Workers Group at Metropolitan Tavern, 95 Farringdon Rd (Farringdon tube).

Weekend of 7/8/9 December Anarchist feminist conference. See inside pages for details.

Sunday, 9 December Campaign for Solidarity with the Soviet Working Class. Campaign meeting to discuss initiation of actions aimed at publicising the struggle of Soviet workers against the bureaucracy. All interested people are invited to attend. 7 p.m. 21 Delany House, Thames St, Greenwich, London SE10.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on Consensus, Dissidence and Repression, Paris, January 1980. What are the different mechanisms which allow the State to control the population, with or without its consent What is consensus Discussion of dissidence and the 'anarchist revolutionary project'. Repression as violent and open form of State domination. More precise details will be arriving later. All correspondence to: P. Blachier, B.P. 14, 92360 Meudon-la-Forêt, France or to Interrogations, via G. Reni 96/6, 10136 Torino (Turin), Italy. Conference organised by Les Raisons de la Colère, Nada (Barcelona), and Interrogations.

'First International Symposium on Anarchism'. To be held at Portland, Oregon (USA) between 18 - 24 February 1980. For details contact: Anarchism Symposium Committee, Box 134 Portland, Oregon, Lewis and Clark College, 97279 USA.

We're all living on BORROWED TIME Borrowed Time will be a monthly wall newspaper suitable for notice boards, shop windows or fly-posting. Among the themes that will be featured in successive issues will be direct action, nuclear power state repression, prisons, education, housing work and sexual politics.

If you would like to help with the preparation or distribution of B.T. please write to; Borrowed Time, Box A, Grapevine Bookshop, 41 Fitzroy Street, Cambridge.

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SHORT, BLUNT, NO SHOCK

WELL, well, well. The story has, as they say, everything. Spies, corruption in high places, royalty, the lot. There's an awful danger of smugness in the business, so I'll refrain from saying 'told you so' too gloatingly. But it is nice to have one's paranoid ramblings more than adequately confirmed. No doubt the national press will shred every column inch possible from the affair. However, the important thing is not these antics, but the reaction of the security establishment to more ordinary citizens.

Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act is now widely described by the media as 'discredited'. It would be possible to think of other descriptions, but let's keep the language temperate for now. Just take it as read that I subsume the entire Act under whatever label you choose to apply. The workings of the OSA were

convincingly exposed during the ABC case (see FREEDOMS, 1978). Accordingly both major political parties have a 'commitment' to 'reform' it. The record of the Labour party in office is, on this matter, unedifying. No, no, don't bring up any red herrings (sorry, no pun intended, really), their record on other matters is not relevant here. It would seem that the opinions of messrs. Callaghan, Foot and Rees on the definition of 'open' government differ from the conventional interpretation. For those who like dramas about an underdog struggling along gamely, there was the story of Clement Freud's private members bill. And very well it did. It didn't actually get passed or influence anybody or anything like that, but never mind, the thought was there.

But! We now have a new government. Now stop it, I know that it's possible to

produce an analysis to show that it's the same government (Whoever you vote for) but just put this airy fairy intellectual nonsense to one side. These are serious matters. As I was saying, we have a new government. With a commitment to reform look, shut up will you! I know that the Labour party took office with the same commitment. But this government is described as 'radical'.

Accordingly, we now have the proposals to replace Section 2 of the OSA with a new Protection of Information Act. Liberal opinion is asking why we can't have a Freedom of Information bill as in USA or Sweden. You can put away those sneers. Canada is just passing one. But apparently such a move would be inappropriate here. It's no good getting at me, I didn't make the decision, I don't know why. Yes, yes, it's easy to speculate,

but let's keep to the facts and give the new proposals a chance, eh? Let's have a look at them.

Liberalisations are promised. Cabinet papers will no longer be automatically classified as secret, unless of course they come under individually specified categories like defence or security. You can't ask fairer than that. National security, you understand. Prosecutions in the defence and international category will take place only if a minister has certified that the national interest clause is involved.

However, there are a couple of points I'm a bit worried about. It seems that any 'responsible authority' can decide that a particular piece of information is sensitive. Then, when the minister has issued a certificate to say that its disclosure is 'likely to cause serious injury to the interests of the nation or endanger the safety of a citizen', a prosecution can follow. This applies even if the information had already been disclosed elsewhere, and not classified. However, we are assured that there would be no prosecution if it had been 'officially available', that is if the Government had told us themselves. That's encouraging anyway. Oh, except this proviso does not apply to the disclosure of information about defence, international relations, security and intelligence and wire tapping, telephone tapping and the interception of mail. There's a special paragraph in the bill about things like tapping. It is to become an offence to mention it at all.

Incidentally, scurrilous comment on the actions of the police could also be covered. The phrase is 'activities in support of the security services'. That could certainly include the Special Branch, ATS and SPG. There's an interesting entry on the Special Branch in the nice glossy brochure published by the British Tourist Authority to mark 150 years of the Metropolitan Police. (The front says 'Authorised Commemorative Edition' in large reassuring letters, so it should be alright to mention it).

'Special Branch provides support and monitors intelligence from both domestic and foreign sources to help track down terrorists and any other individuals who threaten the security of the country'.

Well, the Bill has been going through the Lords. Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor, introduced it as a code that would be 'more liberal, more intelligent and even more capable of enforcement'. You can't argue with that, can you? Especially the last bit. We can only hope that Anthony Blunt's old indiscretions don't interfere with such good intentions.

Personally I find the whole Blunt affair hilarious. We couldn't ask for a better illustration of what 'justice' means. However, I don't suppose that anybody who has been done under the Official Secrets Act in the last 20 years shares the amusement. This would not mean spies. The Act is not there to deal with them. It is to intimidate civil servants and journalists. This is a reflection of all law. It protects those at the top, it's totally ineffective against professional criminals, but it does discourage minor clerks who might get ideas.

D. P.

SOUTHERN AFRICA OUTSIDE THE LAAGER

Our host, a missionary who had seen two generations of Basotho men drawn from these mountains into the mines, summed up his impressions: 'If the men don't kill the women in this struggle for identity, this society could become very matriarchal. Or it could just disintegrate. More and more common will be men like the village lawyer, Ntate Jafeta - an alcoholic, the baby brother of a weak chieftainess's dead husband, a man screaming about his loss of face and his manhood, desperately buying sheep and goats to maintain a herd, torn between urban politics and his rural home politics. More and more common will be the young women, who make joala (maize beer) for the men to drink themselves into oblivion, standing back with dignity as these wife beaters crawl on the ground carrying their almighty sticks. The society is in decay, the land is at a crisis, and South Africa will take no more miners.'

When the Iranian revolution caused oil to be cut off from South Africa, prices went up, the government ordered new plans and restrictions, and white society took one step more into the laager. In Lesotho, the rural taxi fares went up 20% overnight. Nearly a quarter of the village women gardeners were isolated from their market.

When the Mozambique revolution caused riots and demonstrations throughout the mines, a secret government report urged an end to migrancy, improved conditions and a wage rise calculated to attract South African blacks. Since 1970, Black unemployment has been running at 22%. In Lesotho, where every household is dependent upon remittances from the mines, recruitment went down 15% between 1976 and 1977, and during the first eight months of 1978 was a further 17% below figures for the same period in 1977.

A local agriculturalist sketched out the nature of the crisis: 'For eighty years Lesotho has been a 'cheap labour' homeland. During that time, the population has been increasing at a rate of between 1.5 and 2.2 per cent per year. By 1935 there was not enough land to support all the people. In those years, after a series of droughts, the country became an importer of food for the first time in its history. The only alternative came to be work on the mines. Today, about 50% of the men between the ages of 15 and 60 are out of the country at any one time. So the villages are left to the women and children. The children herd the cattle and goats while the women till the fields. These fields may seem beautiful under these cliffs and a hot blue sky, but look closer. For years, over-grazing of the upper slopes has caused deep dongas (gullies) to form across the fields - a vicious natural

drainage system. With no dispersed water nourishment, the fields bake hard and the top soil is blown away in great sand storms.'

Life in the mines has completely ruined social life in the villages. The men must leave early in life to support their families. They leave uneducated, barely literate. The women continue in school. The men return brutalised and take wives 'by capture'. Soon they leave their brides pregnant at home with their families. When they next return, they see the young women more self-sufficient. There are village schools, a few co-operatives, fields are planted and harvested - the new family survives without the man. He is no more than a wage sent by letter. He beats her, accuses her of going with other men, throws her out with nothing but a blanket. She returns to her parents' village.

Reports circulating in Lesotho are alarming. If the unemployment trend continues, they see no alternative to famine by the end of the next decade. Last winter, one 'rich' village in the Prime Minister's district recorded a burial a week. Children were savaged by starving dogs. Women and children retreat to their huts at dusk and men venture out only if armed with sticks the size of axe handles. At the hospitals 'abandoned' children turn up weekly. The infant mortality rate is running close to 200 per thousand.

One western village development worker put it another way: 'Yesterday I was talking with the women who will be teaching at the village primary school from June. We were talking about the valley and I said, 'The people here are hungry now, wait and see how bad it will be in ten years.' She said 'What can be done? What can the farmers do? What can a teacher do?' It wasn't panic or desperation, but enthusiasm - here is a problem, I am the teacher, you are the expert - let's work something out. Now my challenge has been set. What tools to leave so that she might work within her community to help stop what is going on - knowing that the problem is bigger than her, the valley and Lesotho.'

Sanctions, say some local officials, would help. At least the disintegration before change would be of slightly shorter duration. As things stand now, with the South African economy shuffling into the laager, things will get much worse anyway. They will get worse for the South African captives, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. But for Lesotho, so totally dependent upon South Africa, the descent from marginality will be a most acute reflection of the contortions within the laager.

BRIAN MURPHY

HAMILTON STILL DIABOLICAL

IN the light of the 'Persons Unknown' trial both FREEDOM and the New Statesman have recently reminded readers of the background to that 'official incompetent' Michael Worsley. It is by now surely time that we also refresh readers' memories about that rival in official incompetence, judge Alan King-Hamilton.

The best summary of his career so far unearthed for us comes from a 1977 issue of *Private Eye*, under the title 'Hamilton Diabolical'. The aim of the article was to demonstrate that King-Hamilton has 'the most powerful claim' of any judge in this country for removal from the bench (though as a matter of fact he is now due to retire at the end of this trial) and it tells how he was obliged to offer his resignation in 1972. We believe this article is worth reprinting because of the light it throws on the succession of discretions committed by this judge in the course of his career and the quashings of convictions and official reprimands and corrections that have had to be made as a result of his irresponsible performance.

One case not referred to by the article is that of Peter Hain, who was acquitted of a bank robbery charge in 1976, despite the fact that judge King-Hamilton summed up for a conviction. According to JAIL, in its new report on the identification laws, 'It seems that Hain won his case because to a large extent it was fought out in the public sphere and not in the more private arena of most criminal cases...' But it also seems that the judge's summing up was itself so incompetent that the jury felt they need lose little time in going against his advice.

Here is what the *Eye* has to say:

'King-Hamilton presided over the recent Gay News blasphemy case. Opinion is divided between those who think he was given the case in order to ensure a conviction against the newspaper - and those who think he was given it because any conviction in King-Hamilton's court on a sex case stands an excellent chance of being overruled on appeal.

Supporters of the second view point to the judge's inability to refrain from expressing irrelevant, reactionary views during his cases. In particular, he is inclined to hark back to the grand old days of flogging. In October 1965, he told a young man: 'It is conduct such as yours that sometimes causes judges to regret they no longer have the power to order corporal punishment'. Ten years later (February 1975) he was still at it:

'A great many people' he informed Graham Foster, who had stolen a car 'would not appear in the dock if they had corporal punishment when they were younger. It's a great pity the courts no longer have the power to order corporal punishment. The best form of psychiatric treatment is administered not to the head but to the backside'.

This seems to have upset someone in the Inns of Court, for a few days later on the 11th February, the *Daily Telegraph* carried the following remarkable disclaimer:

'Contrary to a report of February 5, Judge King-Hamilton, an Old Bailey judge, asks us to state that he is not and never has been in favour of flogging. Any misunderstanding is regretted'.

A more serious outburst from King-Hamilton earned the early release of a man who had been convicted of robbery. In February 1970 King-Hamilton stopped the case of Michael Barnes to tell his lawyer that he should be pleading guilty. 'I take a very serious view of hopeless cases being decided at public expense', he said. This unusual interpretation of a judge's right to decide a case before (the) defence case is heard earned King-Hamilton a sharp rebuke in the Court of Appeal. Quashing the conviction, Lord Parker, the Lord Chief Justice said, 'The judge's outburst was wholly improper'.

The case underlined another interesting characteristic of King-Hamilton: his ability to contradict himself totally in successive sentences. In his 1970 'outburst' he said:

'It does not add anything to a sentence because a man pleads not guilty. I could have taken something off and given him credit for saving public time and money'.

Or, to put it another way, it does add to a sentence if a man pleads not guilty.



In like style, King-Hamilton told the blasphemy trial this month:

'Although I sometimes read poetry and, as a rule, like what I read. I do not profess to be a judge of it and therefore would not presume to express an opinion as to whether this particular poem is a good one, a bad one or an indifferent one.'

But I have no doubt whatever that this poem is quite appalling'.

In November 1972 King-Hamilton presided over an obscenity case brought by the Crown against two magazines called *In Depth* and *New Direction*. The case was peppered with remarks from the judge which indicated his horror of the publications, but the jury acquitted the publishers on all counts.

However, the judge then awarded costs against the publishers which amounted to £5000. 'Those who publish this sort of material know the risks they are running', he said.

Three months later, he was sitting again in an obscenity case, this time against the comic *Nasty Tales*. Once again, *Nasty Tales* was acquitted. The *Sunday Times* commented:

'What may have influenced the jury was the judge's own views'. But again King-Hamilton forced the comic's publishers to pay the costs of the case. 'Any company', he explained, 'which publishes for gain material of this kind which, quite apart from sex and violence, freely encourages drug-taking, can hardly be surprised if it is prosecuted'.

(During the *Nasty Tales* trial Defence Counsel announced that he wished to call Germaine Greer as a witness. 'Oh God!' was the judge's impatient reaction).

Irritation at juries' acquittals of prisoners is a common feature of Mr. Justice King-Hamilton. When Janie Jones was acquitted of blackmail in 1974, Hamilton sent her down for seven years for a relatively minor prostitution offence. Into the bargain King-Hamilton described Miss Jones as 'the most evil woman ever to come before me'.

This sort of hostility towards prisoners sometimes carries the judge over the bounds of the law. In December 1973, two men, Harold Heawood and Kenneth Rock, were convicted and jailed on charges of indecency with young boys.

Their convictions were quashed by the Court of Appeal. Lord Justice Roskill commented: 'The judge's summing up was extremely unsatisfactory and contained serious misdirections and non-directions'.....

The Appeal Court (considering the *Gay News* case) might remember, into the bargain, that Mr. Justice King-Hamilton is not always as scrupulous in observing court rules as he likes others to be. In 1972, he allowed Felix Topolski into his court to draw pictures of all and sundry to assist the funds of the Reformed synagogue, Upper Berkeley Street, of which he is chairman. When this fact was revealed, King-Hamilton offered to resign both from the bench and from the synagogue. Unfortunately for both, his offer was refused'.

There will be a report on the defence cases of Vince Stevenson and Ronan Bennett in the next issue.

SOLIDARITY WITH CHINESE WORKERS

REPORTS

MEMBERS of Manchester Solidarity Group and Keele Anarchist Group distributed leaflets outside the China bank in Manchester during its official opening on Monday, 12 November. The leaflet is worth reprinting here in full.

IN the midst of an all out attack on working people in the guise of slashing public expenditure cuts, Maggie Thatcher and her cronies found time off to play host to Hua Kuo-fang (the Chinese Party Chairman).

It might appear strange to some people to witness the self-proclaimed representative of the Chinese working class seeing eye-to-eye, and cooperating hand-in-hand with the acknowledged party of the rich in this country. The truth is that Hua (and Mao, Chou En-lai and the Gang of Four before him) is nothing but the chief representative of the ruling, bureaucratic state capitalist class in China. To be truly free and masters of their own lives the working masses in China will have to totally eliminate them and smash their state machine.

The seizure of state power by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 led to the growth of an extremely hierarchical, bureaucratic and totalitarian society. A new ruling class was established, the cadres and members of the Party. The workers and peasants became slaves of the state.

OPPOSITION IN CHINA

The Chinese people have fought back continuously. We are, at this moment, witnessing vigorous opposition to the government.

Since 1968, 17 million young people have been forced to labour in the countryside. Many have returned to the cities, despite the fact that by doing so they became 'criminals'. They have demonstrated in Shanghai and Peking, demanding

to live and work where they choose. In the state farms of Yunan, 50,000 of them struck for a prolonged period and set up their own institutions in confrontation with the party officials.

Thousands of peasants have streamed into the capital, demanding redress of their grievances. Despite the threat of arrest, often without shelter, sufficient clothes or food, they continued their stay and held numerous rallies and sit-ins. Like the British hunger marchers of the 1930s, they demand an end to hunger and persecution.

In the cities, the young workers and students have spearheaded the democracy movement. Autonomous groups have been formed. Underground magazines were published and circulated. "Big character" posters were written and put up in public places. They attacked the present dictatorship, and demanded full democracy and human rights.

The state responded with repression. Many activists have been arrested and the editor of *Exploration*, one of the best known underground papers in Peking, was subjected to a show trial and 15 years in prison.

These movements represent efforts of the Chinese masses fighting back against repression. They show the deep internal contradictions of Chinese society - which promise to engulf the whole of the Chinese mainland in a revolutionary struggle.

Meanwhile, the Chinese and British governments know who their true allies are. So we are subjected to the press and media glorifying our new found 'friends', whilst the Chinese leaders tour the world buying arms and technology - and opening banks like this one. It is essential that workers here understand the big lie for what it is, show their solidarity with those involved in the battle in China - their struggle and ours are basically the same.

AUTHORITARIANISM IN NZ

NEW ZEALAND is becoming increasingly authoritarian. Miscellaneous freedoms and protects go by the board as, on the grounds of drugs or violence, the government increases the arbitrary powers of the police to detain and to search property or people. Members of the ruling National Party want to push the interests of private enterprise while the social freedoms are conservative. Abortion is difficult, government information and transactions are state secrets, libel laws effectively eliminate allegations of corruption in the bureaucracy being publicised, censorship is probably tighter than in most other Western countries. Increasingly New Zealand is becoming

a land of big government, big business and big unions and the sort of developments in the outside world are encouraging this trend. The production of local fuel involves a capital investment of such a size that the state must raise the funds to make deals with the big oil companies to do it for them. An 'influential' Arab prince is presently touring the South Island with investments for the surplus funds of the oil producers in mind; a delegation of German industrialists was recently in New Zealand, also being shown profitable things to invest their money in. Details on what is being offered or what these dealers want are never disclosed. Couple all this with a limited

press which is essentially conservative, totally uninvestigative, preferring to retail a news-as-entertainment type package which can sell advertising space to local businessmen and to whom you don't do the disservice of criticising the government that supports them.

The latest news is a law that allows the government to determine that a project is in the national interest to such an extent that the established planning and environmental appeal procedures can be done away with and replaced by just one decision of arbitration, the arbitrators being appointed by the government. All this is designed with the government's haste to get into the local production of petroleum products which is centred around one large project, but the powers they take on are by no means limited to this one project. They can invoke the new law at any time.

MIKE BLUNDELL

SUSSEX LIBERTARIANS

WE are a large and active group of anarchist socialists working in all aspects of university issues, working within the students' union as an influential group. We are particularly seeking contacts with other libertarian groups working within the education system, and with libertarian groups in our area. Four of our members are soon facing trial for 'criminal damage' during our students' union campaign against disciplinary exams last term... Up-to-date information will be sent after the trial.

- LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST GROUP
(c/o Students Union, Falmer House, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton)

ST BENEDICT'S

WHILE staff at St Benedict's in Tooting, south London, occupy the hospital to prevent its closure by the area health authority as part of the spending cuts, our comrade Peter Good reports in detail on a similar struggle at Calderstones, Lancashire in this week's FREEDOM Review. It is to be noted that in the case of St Benedict's the Royal College of Nursing has joined with COHSE, NUPE, doctors, ancillary staff and patients in support of the occupation.

DOUGLAS KEPPER

Any of his friends who have not already heard the sad news will be grieved to learn that Douglas Kepper, stalwart of so many campaigns and practical helper of drug addicts, is in hospital. Douglas has been a diabetic for many years. This summer a mishap to his foot resulted in sepsis which failed to heal and he has had to have part of his left foot amputated. Letters to him at Essenden Ward, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn, Herts.

THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN THE USA

-A BRIEF NOTE

DURING my last three weeks travelling in Great Britain, I've met a number of anarchists - all very interested and uninformed about the movement in the U.S. This sketch will hopefully answer some questions - and generate many more.

The first thing to understand about the States is that the vast majority of activists refuse to label themselves specifically. The Maoist/Trotskyists are marginal in most grass roots organising. Most people just say, "I'm a radical" or "I believe in decentralised socialism". Even among the more specific - the anarcho-feminists, libertarian Marxists, socialist feminists etc, there is a great deal of open-endedness to the definitions. And to me it seems like a good thing. Often the purer a person's politics the less they do.

I'm a member of a community of 20-30 active people with maybe 300 to 500 supporters. Half the activists call themselves anarcho-feminists. The others believe in feminist process (one of our unifying principles) and anarcho-feminist goals, but reject the label.

ANARCHIST-FEMINIST WEEKEND

AN anarchist feminist weekend is planned for December 7, 8, 9 at the Centro Iberico, 421a Harrow Rd, London (Westbourne Pk nearest tube) for women only. There will be workshops on: video, self-defence, 'creative destruction', as well as discussion workshops on internationalism, on 'living and work situations' and others. Poetry, films and other entertainment are also planned, and a creche, food and accommodation are available.

In conjunction with the weekend there will be an open discussion with both men and women on 'Sexism in the Anarchist Movement' on Saturday, 8 December, 7 pm. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

This is seen as an attempt to discuss the problems of sexism through direct contact with men and women, rather than dealing with it in a separatist way. Refreshments, a film show, and anarchist feminist literature.

Women attending the Centro Iberico workshops over the weekend should bring sleeping bags.

For further information write to Box 33, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1, or phone Cath (01) 251-3043 (working hours); Angie (01) 226-3208; or Jessica (01) 733-2383 (evenings)

Sometimes I think they're right. Nevertheless I label myself, and there are growing numbers of people who do. Incidentally, many men in the US call themselves feminists, and are in socialist feminist groups (like the New American Movement) and anarcho-feminist collectives (like Black Feather in Seattle, Black Rose in Palo Alto, Rising Free in New York, Solstice in Berkeley, and Emma's Kids in San Francisco). I realise things are quite different here. Why they are I'm still trying to puzzle out.

Most anarcho-feminists and anarchists work directly in collectives and grass roots movements that aren't explicitly anarchist or feminist. But their influence can clearly be seen - in the anti-nuclear movement, the anti-draft, the legalise marijuana drives, mental patients' liberation, ecological and alternative technology groups and especially the women's movement.

The largest gathering of anarcho-feminists and anarchists I've ever been to was the recent attempt to occupy the Seabrook Power Station in New Hampshire. Besides the many implicit A's and A-F's, there were people from Texas Yellow Rose Life Force, Rocky Flats Colorado Truth Force, Direct Current, Emma's Kids, Black Rose-Palo Alto, SAFE and SoNoMa Atomics, all from California, Black Feather, Rising Free and anarchists from Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

Other than such action-oriented gatherings most communication is either informal (many parties and picnics in the Bay Area for example) or through joint work. Most groups probably get *Open Road*, many read *Fifth Estate* and the *Black Rose* magazine from Boston, and there is a fair degree of mailing of papers to each other. But communication is far from perfect.

There are a number of networks. The Anarchist Communist Federation has ten groups in the US and Canada and a good newspaper that focuses on direct action (see addresses). The Yippies - always hard to define but with definite anarchist tendencies - have 31 groups or contacts. The Movement for a New Society (MNS), which is a creative kind of anarchism, Marxism, pacifism and feminism, has numerous affiliates and many fine publications, and there is also the War Resisters League (anarchist pacifist with a growing feminist perspective), which has offices in most regions of the US. And the IWW remains active in many areas on a small scale.

The most influential writers are the anarcho-feminists, Carol Ehrlich, Peggy Kornegger, and the older theoreticians like Bookchin, Chomsky, Zinn, Roszak

and Ellsberg. Ursula Le Guin and Emma Goldman are probably the most widely read of all.

Before giving some contact addresses, a word about the Libertarians is in order. US Libertarians are anarcho-capitalists - not 'libertarians' as understood here in Britain and in Spain. But the rapidly growing Libertarians do have a left wing that has an anti-state, anti-monopoly capitalism and anti-imperialism emphasis. The left wing has made gay rights, anti-conscription, anti-nukes and anti-psychiatry major focuses. While many American activists don't agree, I think their growth is basically a healthy sign. It is part of a growing anti-authoritarian tendency in the US.

Black Rose - Palo Alto tries to work with Libertarians, socialist feminists and libertarian Marxists, since we think we agree with them all more than we disagree. But it is often difficult and old distrusts and sectarian attitudes die hard with us as with everyone on the left.

Anyway - basically I'm very optimistic about the US. (Although readers should be warned I'm often considered overly-optimistic). If you want to know more - go see for yourself. Love and Anarchy.

CRYSTAL

(Crystal is a member of Palo Alto Black Rose, now travelling in Europe).

* * *

Black Rose - Palo Alto
Amoral House
4400 Fair Oaks Ave, Meulo Park 94025
California

Black Feather
no. 903, 507 3rd Ave.
Seattle, Wash. 98104

Black Rose Magazine
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Direct Current
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Emma's Kids
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MNS
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Philadelphia, Penn. 19143

Open Road
PO Box 6135
Station G, V6R4G5
British Columbia, Canada

ACF
North American Anarchist
POB no. 2, Station O
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4B 2B0

Note: None of the Black Roses are connected to others. This includes the fine Black Rose Books in Canada.

SYNDICALIST EDUCATION

FELLOW WORKERS, There was a time when the working class of this country had a fighting organisation which was on the right road to emancipation - the syndicalist movement.

This movement constituted a force to be reckoned with, with well thought out principles and constitution. However, the coming of the First World War and the growth of the Labour party contributed to the collapse of syndicalism in Britain and the leading of the working class up the blind alleys of parliamentarianism.

Furthermore, the betrayal of the working class in the General Strike of 1926 and the subsequent betrayals by various Labour governments have led to the confusion and bewilderment which confounds the average worker today.

There have been many attempts to re-awaken syndicalist ideas in Britain by small isolated groups, the Wobblies, the SWF and more recently the London Workers Group and newly formed Direct Action Movement. Each has and is contributing in its own way to a reemergence of syndicalist thinking, and assisting the syndicalist tactics being used by militant workers in industry.

Often the unity between these various organisations is marred by desire to retain their own identity or in some cases it is due to personality clashes. Meanwhile the working class continue to suffer under capitalism and to a great extent remain ignorant of their ability to free themselves by syndicalist organisation of industry.

Whilst in no way do I decry the efforts of these groups, and have retained membership, and loyally support some of them, nevertheless I feel we should not ignore the thought and effort of the past when there really was a syndicalist movement alive in Britain.

The basic ideas which were written then are still applicable today and would be a valuable contribution to the workers understanding of the society in which they are forced to live.

If then as a result of that understanding they attach themselves to one or another of the various syndicalist organisations so be it, they are then empowered to make a valuable contribution towards the emancipation of the working class.

What I am proposing is a rebirth of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League, based upon the original principles and constitution, whose object would be the production of syndicalist educational literature and tapes for workers, which in no way deviate from original principles but are updated in the light of modern circumstances.

Basically I am saying, back to the beginning - now modernise it; Tom Mann pamphlets such as 'Forging the Weapon' are more valuable today in our present climate than they were at a time of a large syndicalist-conscious movement. Such literature can be updated and would be of tremendous value.

Letters

This is not a proposal for forming yet another organisation as such, aiming to be the vehicle by which the workers achieve their emancipation.

Rather it is the reforming of the original organisation, the ISEL, as a syndicalist educational organisation whose sole purpose would be the production of syndicalist literature enabling the worker to understand capitalist society and syndicalist tactics and organisation.

It is to be hoped that by the production and distribution of such literature the workers would become syndicalist orientated and thus would contribute to whichever organisation they joined by a militant understanding.

With such understanding of these principles the choice becomes theirs and safeguards against elitism and coercion within the workers' movement; they will decide.

I'm putting these ideas forward as a tentative proposal and would welcome ideas and criticism.

BOB MANDER

PRESENT HISTORY

Dear comrades

I agree with those who believe we must study history in order to understand the present, and my objection to the amount of history in FREEDOM was not intended as a put down of history in general. What I objected to was the tendency to concentrate on history at the expense of the present, a chewing over of obscure facts and anecdotes which have no bearing on the present and are often pretty boring. In contrast, an example of historical material used well was the Review on Joe Hill and Industrial Unionism, which linked the past with the present (although 'Rebel Girl' made me feel pretty nauseous!)

Love and anarchy

WINSTON SMITH

Leeds

HOME EDUCATION

Dear comrades

I am not certain whether or not these ideas have been printed up, but it occurred to me that as the law stands children can be educated at home if able to meet the required standards of a school inspector.

Parents who do not feel sufficiently confident to teach their children entirely on their own could pool together and pay for a teacher with qualifications to visit their children at home say once or twice a week. Children whose parents could not afford this could apply to a community fund to pay for a tutor's visit. In this way unemployed teachers could find work and a lot of libertarian families would be a lot happier.

Examinations as we know them are in my opinion a hindrance to learning and completely immaterial. When a person finds out what they really want to do most, they put all their heart and soul into doing it. Teachers are quite capable of assessing progress without having to programme a student through harmful parrot learning exams. (There are of course some who have photographic memories and also those who like exams). As it happens many scientific and artistic innovators are self taught. No authoritarian system could create a Galileo or a Newton. In fact such people are usually suppressed by the power mongers of the day. Education as we know it is a convenient form of brainwashing and catechising to suit the power elite.

It is time for us to teach the education ministry a lesson they will never forget by boycotting authoritarian schools altogether.

Cheers, AMA

Edinburgh

CORRECTION

Dear comrades

Re my article 'The Manchurian Candidate', no. 19: there was a printing omission of the sections of two sentences on page 15, column one, in the next to bottom paragraph. As it stands it does not make sense. I will quote part of the relevant paragraph inserting, and underlining, the missing words.

"Two more points arise. One is the tendency of intellectuals to go on arguing about the old and remote philosophical oppositions which have occupied them in different forms from time immemorial such as, for instance, the flesh vs. the spirit, idealism vs. materialism, the mind vs. the body, heredity vs. environment etc. etc. and to look for the resolution in a similarly remote and abstract system of philosophy. One feels that they have no relation with the actual living reality of the vast mass of the people."

Without the underlined words it can be seen that the meaning is lost.

Good wishes,

FRED YATES

London SE18

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NO 'NEWS FROM ANGEL ALLEY'

NO "News from Angel Alley" is not necessarily good news. We have remained silent while patiently waiting for some kind of response to our appeals for money to meet our ever rising premises overheads bills and for people to come forward with ideas and the will and the time to inject life into our silent premises and to clear away the cobwebs from our library and make it into a vital "think tank" of service to our propagandists near and far.

So far as the library and the press are concerned there have been one or two letters but no practical suggestions. The financial situation can be briefly summarized. FREEDOM deficit fund total at the end of September was £1049, £40 more than at the same time last year. However FREEDOM sales and subscriptions show an increase of £600, a healthy sign. Bookshop and Freedom Press literature sales were £200 down at £6,200. But all our costs are up on 1978 and the Premises Overheads Fund

appeal aimed at raising £1000 (which only just covers our Rates bill for 1979) after the magnificent start given by an old reader who sent £100, has produced only £180 in all with only six weeks to go to the end of 1979.

We must make it clear to all our friends that if we cannot establish this overheads fund then we will be obliged to consider alternatives to our continued occupation of the Angel Alley premises. Obviously the publication of FREEDOM and of Freedom Press literature is our main task. At the moment the reprinting of F.P.

books and pamphlets as well as new titles is seriously hampered by a lack of funds which are instead being swallowed up in maintaining our premises in Angel Alley. If we have to move it will not only add to the difficulties of publishing and despatching FREEDOM but it will mean an end to our bookshop and to any ideas for a flourishing library and of once more printing our own literature as we have done for more than 30 years.

Are there no friends of Freedom Press to help solve this financial problem?

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WORKPOINTS

TRADE UNIONS

The fact that COHSE were more of a hindrance than a help to us doesn't mean to say that they are the worst of the Public Service unions or indeed are any different from other Trades Unions. NUPE, despite its much maligned press image, are the greatest cut-throats of them all. Equally, not all FTOs will sell you out - though an awful lot will. Three FTOs stood by us to the end, one of whom seriously putting his job in jeopardy in the process.

If you are wronged by a union, don't waste your time appealing against it. All unions are expert at closing ranks. You stand a better chance and fairer treatment if you are nursing a grievance, by appealing to the management side. Frequently in the old days there was much talk of us forming our own union. The more we explored the possibility the more problems we saw. In retrospect we should have had a go.

NHS MANAGEMENT

In a field in which even the people (McKinley Business Consultants) who worked out the re-organised structure, admit it was a basic mistake, it's not unnaturally a shaky occupation to be in. Not unsurprisingly much fear exists in its ranks. There is much pressure on managers to cope with headline budgets. Hence the ones who seek promotion are the ones who cope and can get by without raising too much union/public pressure. Certainly one of the most upsetting tactics that led to our dismissals was our practise of running managers up the Grievance Procedure ladder. As a tactic it hit at the very root of modern management theory - viz. avoid at all costs showing a superior manager that you have problems handling employee/union grievances.

IMAGINATIVE INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Works extremely well. A small number of people can launch a dispute quickly with maximum impact. Disadvantages, the workforce comes to rely on it to solve all disputes. It doesn't involve the workforce in participating in direct industrial action. The national press are only interested in industrial action that harm patients.

CALDERSTONES NOW

Union activity is non-existent. COHSE has collapsed and the reliable grapevine reports that privately management gloat on how easy the place is to manage. But still there are wards being run by one nurse...

THE POLICE

Long ago we learned, interestingly from a young lady who was having an affair with a constable, that our Executive was being 'monitored' and indeed all industrial disputes in the area were noted by the 'branch' and files kept on key people involved. There were occasions, and particularly the period just after our suspensions when something strange was happening to our telephone. But I must have been drunk, I can't really believe things like that can happen...

POLITICS

Now this is a hard one. There are a lot of Marxist abbreviations knocking about in Trades Unions - the majority get labelled as such, and once management or a Trade Union can slot you into a category then you are much easier to deal with. From the start I moved on the basis that it was my job to represent my members' views. As such I kept my politics to myself as say, a christian, would. I met many marxists in the movement but never once an anarchist. There exists much sympathy and enthusiasm for anarchist methods of doing things. Once you attach the label 'anarchist' to them people become frightened.

I always objected to people applying the label 'militant' to me. I said then and now that I was not a 'militant' nor a 'moderate'. I was someone who was attempting to be 'honest'.

An interesting anecdote about this case was when one of my friends tackled a manager involved in our sackings. Admittedly they were both propping up the bar but during the conversation out came this little gem:

"People with political views like that shouldn't be employed in hospitals."

"What political views?"

"Bloody Anarchists"

TO DATE

Tony managed to get a job in a moulding factory on bread-line wages. He is still writing to hospitals who are short of nurses. We still meet for a jar or two - we've seen much together.

Folks interested in reading further in this case should go into the legal section of any large library and ask for a copy of 'INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LAW REVIEW'. If you sit in the legal department long enough (as I did) you will eventually meet many people (as I did) who are defending themselves at a Tribunal, each one accuses a Trade Union of 'selling them out'. Why oh why doesn't someone do 'research' on these people.

I eventually got a job

I eventually got a job as a OMO bus driver. I find it mind killing but I'm grateful for the work. We have been rehoused, and now live on the edge of a large council estate in Clitheroe. But there's always something on the horizon and news is that big Doreen Frampton SRN has been released and we plan to press out the next edition of ANARCHISM LANCASTRUM.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

The answer to this mess is too simple. Put the power and the decision making back on ward level. There will still be a need for administrators but their role should be urgently re-defined as back-up support for the front line troops. In the last analysis there is no reason why patients and relatives cannot run their own wards and hospitals, working with the medical staff. I know from my ten years of nursing experience that subnormal people and those classed as mentally ill are very capable of running their own lives on one hundredth of the present budget.

In the meantime we have a morass of Divisional Nursing Officers, District Personnel Officers, Sector Nursing Officers, Area Administrators, Deputy Nurse Education Officers, Clothing Co-ordinators, Unit Domestic Managers, Unit Nursing Officers amongst others all standing in the way.

Really, something should be done about it....

Peter Good

FOOTNOTE

You will have noticed that this Review Section is longer than usual. This is for a couple of reasons.

We think that Peter's story needed to be presented in one piece, rather than split over two issues. You can read it as a parable, as a warning or as an inspiration. Suit yourself. It doesn't need comment from us. Oh, just one thing. We're glad to hear that there's to be a new 'Anarchism Lancastrium'.

The other reason for the expanded edition is more prosaic. Due to missed issue earlier in the year, we're a bit behind on our publishing schedule. The occasional larger issue is to compensate for this.

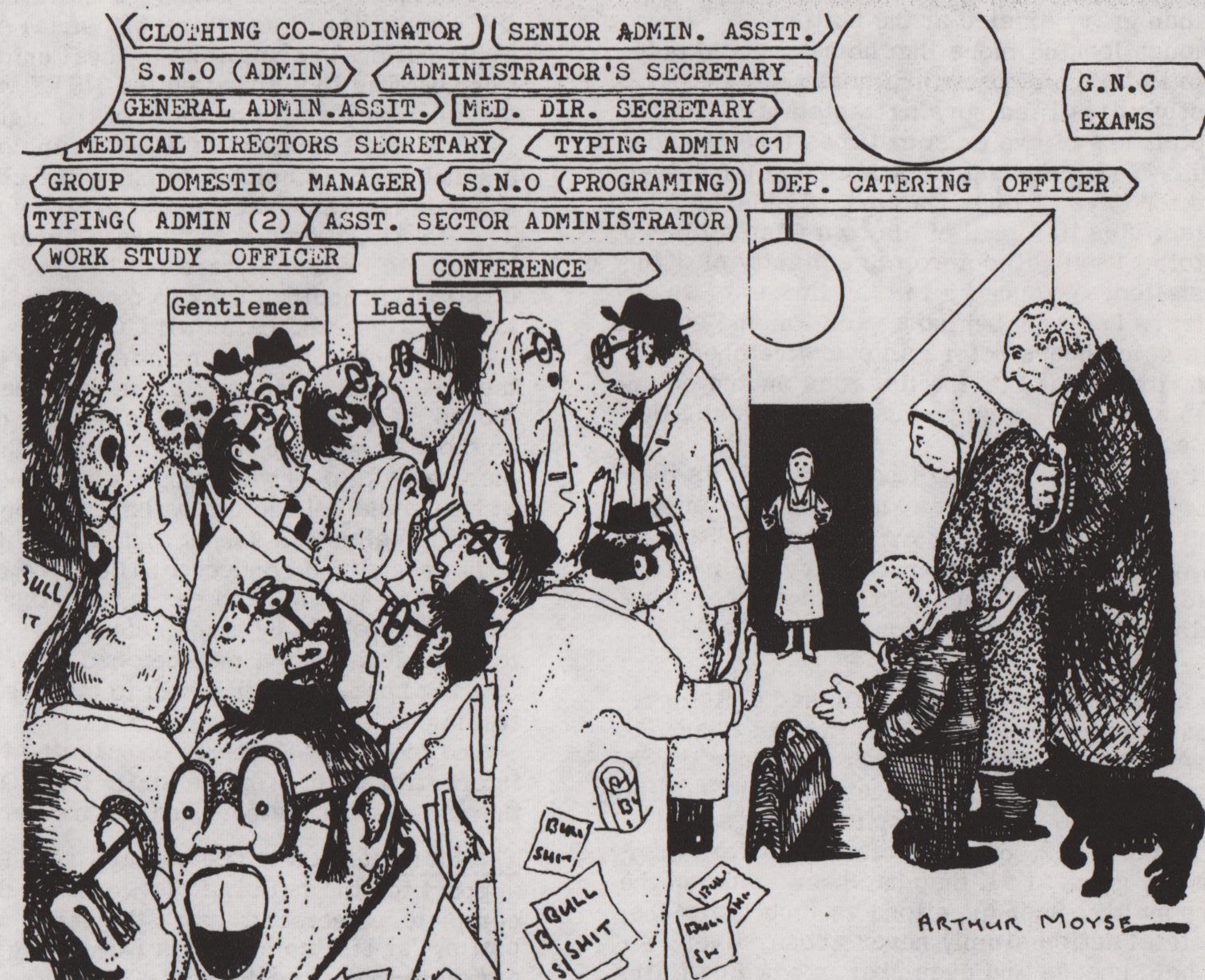
As usual, we shall also have a larger than usual edition for the last one of the year, around Christmas (its either that or be in here pasting up on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve). That issue will have a higher cover price, but will be included in the normal subscription.

Freedom

Anarchist Review

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Vol 40 No 21

SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE



I WRITE this by way of explanation of my whereabouts over the past two years. In some ways it constitutes an apology for I knew beforehand what the outcome was likely to be, and perhaps I could have used my energy to more honest endeavours. However, what follows is somewhat trimmed and glossed over as I have not wished to delve into personalities (which range from the heroic to the well poisoner) and because it would require of the reader detailed knowledge of employment legislation.

December 1976 had everything going for me. I had a plum job working with subnormal people on a successful venture adapting 'work' to them rather than the other way around. With my first wife and our two kids we had a house (tied to the job alas), an old car, and just enough money to keep us content from week to week. In addition I was the senior moderator on Anarchism Lancastrium, an organ that fluttered around the more lunatic fringe of the movement but whose glossy product-

ion methods and sinister financial backing became the envy of the anarchist press houses.

That fateful night in December saw me in attendance at the Annual General Meeting of the hospital branch of COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees). Up to then I had been 'an active branch member'; I'd turn up to odd meetings and maybe argue the odds with someone over a pint or two. That night some silly bugger whom I hardly knew proposed me as Branch Chairman, was seconded from the floor and I accepted all within the space of thirty seconds. With hindsight I should have stood up and declared my politics or declined or even accepted and gone with the flow and gotten rich from the pickings. But I did none of these. I took the job on.

Calderstones is similar to most giant Victorian mental hospitals. Built of brick, huge three storey blocks, landscaped gardens, tucked away from sight in the depths of Lancashire's very fine countryside. Up until 'en years ago

it ran very much like other hospitals. Highly institutionalised staff and patients, drab dormitory wards, meal time slob and labour on the hospital farm. Then the inevitable scandal of the mid sixties, a massive injection of cash and 'new ideas'. Wards were split up, decorated, refurbished, personalised. Patients were scrubbed clean, dressed in real clothes and put to work in new Industrial Therapy Centres. And the staff were taken in by new career structures whereby the 'best' nurses were promoted to office desks and the ancillary staff were work studied and reorganised and the hospital itself became part of the Burnley Health District which in turn paid homage to the Lancashire Area Health Authority which fell within the North West Regional Health Authority. And as each tier of authority grew came a desk, a filing cabinet, an office, a secretary. And with them came the new whizz kids of Britain's fastest growing industry - Personnel Officers, Administrators, Work Study Officers. With such a variety of new found positions power became the name of the game.

As each tier of authority grew it quickly became indispensable, it had to be referred to, be consulted. Where in the past a decision was made on the spot by a Matron, now simple queries were being referred to distant committees who would juggle the problem around in the air, leave half of it up there then refer it on up the ladder.

While at the top of the pile managers frew fat from being indispensable no such gravy existed at the bottom.

The wards, although looking more like homes, could only reach coping levels in terms of providing nursing staff. Night nurses, mostly unqualified nursing assistants, found themselves in sole charge of two or sometimes three wards throughout the night. Young student nurses found themselves in charge of wards for days on end. On ward of elderly sub-normal men a patient dies in a pool of his own vomited blood huddled around a toilet bowl without even the dignity of dying on ward that was staffed. A young girl in the throes of an epileptic seizure traps her arm behind a radiator and suffers severe burns, it is some hours before an overstretched Sister finds her on her rounds... the list goes on and on until it bores you into a sense of weary nausea that eventually you will shut your ears to.

However, here I am at this meeting finding myself as the Branch Chairman. Christ! I don't even know what a composite resolution is let alone know how to 'negotiate' or 'have a word with management'. Were it ever necessary for me to venture near the administrative block I'd find myself making an unconscious detour. What the hell I found myself asking had I taken on

Trade Unionism at Calderstones had barely had a history. Odd individuals were remembered from the past as Charge Nurse so-and-so who had a cushy number or was soon promoted. Before reorganisation the Branch Chairman or Secretary had occasionally popped in to see the Hospital Management Committee where he got a yes, or more often a no, to a query. But if he had made any gains at all they had been made on the strength of his personality. Such questions as mobilising the shop floor or industrial action simply never arose. Every so often management held cheese and cucumber sandwich affairs on some pretext where local union officials (there were twelve different unions at Calderstones) had the opportunity to meet senior management. I went to one soon after being elected. Unfortunately I have a drinking problem. I never went to any more. No more were ever held.

There were fifteen people elected to form the Branch Executive that night, with perhaps only one with any knowledge of Trade Unionism. Proposed at that meeting came a call for 'something to be done' about our staffing levels. The retiring Chairman explained that he, along with the COHSE Full Time Officer (FTO) had taken this grievance right up to Area Health Authority level. The Branch still pressed for 'something to be done'.

From that moment on I began to soak up every scrap of information I could on Trade Unionism and the various complex power structures that contaminate the NHS.

I met my first FTO - Eddie Lawson. Regional Secretary of COHSE, a professed moderate, ex-Guards Sergeant Major. Recognised as a brilliant recruiter, he bullied membership

up to 30,000 from 4,000 in four years. Alas, his capabilities as a recruiter were not matched in his commitment to the working man and woman. When the history of the NW NHS is written, people may stop to ask what were COHSE doing about it. How could they sit back and do nothing. Because me old mate, they were hand in glove with leading personalities in the NHS power structure.

Lesson One: Because someone wears a Union badge and is employed by you as a FTO to defend and improve your conditions, doesn't necessarily mean that they are on your side.

But back to the ranch. For some months the Unions had been allocated an office. It had lain unused with a desk, filing cabinets, a few chairs and a telephone. Much to the consternation of management I placed a large sign outside announcing a daily lunch time surgery. And as people called in I got to learn all about pay, work study, leave entitlements, in fact all the nitty gritty that goes to make up daily TU work. If I didn't know anything I'd ring up a FTO. Looking back now, perhaps fifteen calls a day (and most evenings) were perhaps a bit much - but it took me a long time to work out the role of an FTO.

Myself and the Branch Secretary call a meeting of all the hospital union reps and put to them COHSE's resolution that something should be done about staffing levels, viz: that we should ballot the whole hospital with regard to sounding out the possibility of us taking Industrial Action. It is unwise to apply national reputations to local union branches. And our hospital was in a sorry state. NUPE with about 250 members (all ancillary staff and most of the night nurses) was run by old Bob, a nice enough fella who'd been doing the job for years and had a cushy number running the clothing stores, felt that it would take several months to sound out all his members. The Royal College of Nursing (a hyper-elitist organisation run by retired matrons) were not happy at all. Thus we took these unhelpful soundings back to our executive and it was decided to go it alone and ballot all COHSE members.

Years ahead of Tory manifestos we decide that the ballot must be secret. Remember we were dealing with staff who only looked on Trade Unions as some sort of insurance policy who'd be there to provide help should something go amiss. Certainly there was an overwhelming feeling (including me) that Industrial Action could not include walking out on patients.

Permission was sought and granted from management to walk around and conduct a ballot. We chose six 'responsible nurses' to monitor and carry the sealed box around the hospital accompanied by a shop steward. The steward's job was to record whether a member had voted and enter their name in a big book. Balloting was to take place over three days and two nights.

And from that first day of balloting things began to take an interesting turn. For the staff, for COHSE, the other unions, the press, management and for me personally.

The Staff It quickly became apparent that there was massive support for the ballot. Folk would read the leaflet, exclaim complete agreement, mark the paper with a cross and exclaim, 'at last something's being done'. It also became apparent that something was sadly amiss with our branch records. Our darling Secretary had completely ignored branch administration with the sole exception of the quarterly cheque. But perhaps more of that anon. At the start of the ballot we had an estimated membership of 190. As it turned out the ballot proved to be the best recruiting campaign of all times. Stewards had their pockets crammed with COHSE application forms. Within three days we had over 400 members.

The Other Unions The other unions had no choice but to wake up. Blissfully unaware of the TUC's Bridlington agreement (which strictly discourages inter-union transfers) we unashamedly poached people from other unions and preached the omnipotence of COHSE. NUPE's monopoly of night staff crumbled the first night the ballot went round on night shift. NALGO's thirty nursing members were reduced to five in as many hours.

The Press Fortunately the Lancashire Evening Telegraph was not an anti union paper - more a benign muckraker. Whoever stirred up the muck they'd publish it, word for word in thumping great headlines that on occasions, even startled me! As

OUR THANKS TO THE PRESS FOR THEIR FAIR AND EFFECTIVE COVERAGE OF THE ACTION RECENTLY UNDERTAKEN AT THIS HOSPITAL TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF OUR RESIDENTS: viz:

Radio Blackburn, The Lancashire Telegraph, the Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, B.B.C. T.V., Granada Television.

says COHSE
Nurses
'vital to the people'

Ch FIGHT!

'a OPPOSE
0 UNEMPLOYMENT,
ACT NOW

Nurses trace the downward path of Burnley nurses

leader MANAGEMENT

DEFEND NURSES' JOBS

'crazy'

Complaints about STAFF SHORTAGE

'shrugged off'

COHSE DEFEND

THE FIGHT FOR JOBS

slam ACTION

-protest

everywhere our local radio was desperate for solid local news and a similar philosophy existed there.

Management Oh dear. The management reacted differently at different levels. The hospital managers willingly passed up responsibility to the District. The District Press Officer, a young woman on £8,500 p.a., whom I only ever met once, would issue the same monotonous statement: "No comment, it is not the policy of the Burnley Health District to discuss internal problems with the media".

It was at Unit level that the real problems began. A Unit comprises several wards or Therapy departments, employs maybe 50 staff and is managed by a Unit Officer. We had 15 Unit Officers at Calderstones and a fair mixture of young whizz kids and jobs-for-the-boys-until-retirement is a fair summary. Only one, John our Branch Vice Chairman, was sympathetic to trade unionism, each one of his management colleagues was eventually to stab him in the back.

This level is important because it's the only level of management that the ward staff see each day. Unit Officers plan shifts,

holidays, staff deployment, overtime and have a major say in promotional policy.

We'll return to those Unit Officers later but for now I'll keep to my own. Dear Trevor wasn't such a bad lad really. Young, ambitious, keen to get on he was OK provided you steered him away from making managerial decisions. His attitude towards Trade Unions was taken from yesterday's Daily Mail - but he was at least honest about it. Given the option I'd sooner be kicked in the teeth than stabbed in the back.

The day after the ballot started I was demoted from Charge Nurse to Deputy Charge Nurse (on administrative grounds) and forcibly transferred from my Community work project to the hospital farm.

Pendle View (the farm) was the very antithesis of my idea of work and the mentally handicapped. It served as the hospital showpiece where all the visitors were shown around. Rabbit hutches, landscaped gardens, giant aviaries - all of which mustn't be touched except by the chosen few patients. Patients were divided into gangs under the supervision of a nursing

assistant. The pressure on the staff was to achieve results with tasks and not the patients, with the inevitable result that the nurse would do the job while the patient held his or her coat.

The Unit was run by Sam, old, ambitious, keen to get on he was OK providing you steered him away from making decisions. His attitude to Trade Unions was just to the right of Rhodes Boyson - but never to your face. Unfortunately old Sam was Branch Secretary of NALGO (Nursing). Old Sam gave me five of his most difficult patients and instructed me to transport 50 tons of gravel from the Works Department down to Pendle View. We were issued with two wheelbarrows and four shovels. Never one for mathematical analysis I estimated that this would take some five months on the outside.

Along with the Ballot we launched our Branch Newspaper. Unimaginatively entitled *Info* it was a chirpy mixture of employee rights, events, outrageous libel and anonymous interviews. Management described it as scullerous and blatantly anarchistic. On two subsequent occasions the District Personnel Officer attempted to bring legal proceedings against its editors. Management refused permission for it to be distributed through the hospital postal system. When asked why I was told that they could not condone a magazine printed by the Underground Press Syndicate being circulated on Crown property.

Needless to say the staff loved it. In fact it's the only paper, amongst all the very professional union journals distributed around the hospital, that people sat down and read from cover to cover. There's a lesson in that somewhere.

The Ballot was counted in front of a packed Branch meeting. The scrutineers returned a thumping 91 per cent in favour of taking Industrial Action. Thus I announced a mass meeting for the following Wednesday for all hospital staff in the Central Ballroom. News spread like wildfire not only through Calderstones but in other local hospitals. Here was a union actually calling a meeting of all hospital staff and threatening industrial action. Those few days leading up to the mass meeting at Calderstones were indeed heady days. Shop Stewards became hero figures, everyone wore a COHSE badge and the talk was all COHSE.

Come the Wednesday and the hall is packed. Natty dressed young men from the BBC and Granada sweep arc lamps across the assembled staff, as I with John stand atop a couple of tables. It's a strange feeling - power, like the goose with delusions of gander it can easily go to the head. It's oh so easy to sway a crowd packed into a confined space. Forget about the minor questions, just put your case with passion and confident logic, the feeling of the mob will take care of the rest. Each group needs its Ian Paisley, its Brian Clough, its Enoch Powell. Their reassuring logic helps you sort out your problems - so much easier to go along with the mass.

The meeting voted to commence industrial action from the following Monday. It included staff taking all meal breaks, one qualified staff to be in charge of each ward at all times all night. Staff were only to accept responsibility for one ward.

Things by now had almost become impossible for me personally. The press were ringing me constantly, as were a dozen different hospitals and the local SWP! Old Sam would simply announce that Mr Good is not available and I would be plodding back and forth with my barrows of gravel and five fairly unmanageable lads. I would arrange permission from Sam to attend a meeting at a certain time and then minutes before the meeting was due to start Trevor would turn up, overrule Sam and declare that I cannot be spared. One eventually learns to live with paranoia and come to like it really.

Still Monday came and to avoid silly games I along with John took a week's leave to 'nurse' the action through. We practically lived in the union office. Rarely did the phone stop ringing and we were besieged with queries, visitors, reporters, bottles of ale and chip butties.

Within two days the District Management Team asked for an emergency meeting with all the Trades Unions at Calderstones.

A packed conference room with all these impeccably dressed managers at one end and all the unions at the other; equally well dressed except me who appeared in what was to become known as my negotiating jeans.

This really was the first time I'd seen FTOs in action. Brilliant speakers and negotiators - and really with no industrial muscle they had to be.

The Chairman opened the meeting by asking the union to state their case. An invitation my FTO accepted by saying he could do no better than ask, "Mr Good to state the case from ward level. Christ I nearly fell through the floor. I stumbled and stuttered and felt like a juggler very conscious of an unappreciative audience, my confidence slipping with each ball. From there the meeting went from waffle to waffle, the FTOs vying with each other to score points on eloquence yet afraid to commit themselves. And each manager trying to prove himself as having full control over his own area of responsibility.

A word though about our District Nursing Officer. Managers in the NHS who prove themselves to be incompetent are never sacked as are more junior nurses; instead they are promoted out of the way or if they are really bad they are moved sideways. The latter fate fell to our DNO who was moved from Preston to Burnley District Management Team. A move described by a senior Preston manager as "our gain and your loss".

Ms Blackstock is elderly, ambitious and keen to get on and OK if she can be steered away from making a decision. Alas she insisted on making such decisions with alarming regularity. As a manager she was atrocious, as each colleague she worked with admitted. Privately mind you, privately. Ms Blackstock and I never hit it off from the start.

That particular meeting ended in nothing. Management insisting that things were not ideal but their graphs showed that there were adequate levels of staff.

I learned much at that meeting. That night I took off to the woods and with a bottle of Bells for company worked it all out.

Lesson one and most important of all is that as a Shop Steward you must lose all fear of people. That includes not only management, but the press, your own members, FTOs. Such an obvious lesson reads much easier than it is in practice. Number two is to be totally honest throughout. I knew I could never develop the art of talking about nothing (called snowing) at negotiations. Thirdly it was imperative that we develop some sort of industrial muscle. Walk outs and strikes were clearly out of the question. And it was pretty obvious that senior management were not too concerned about staff not taking meal breaks and wards could always be covered by junior management who were expendable anyhow.

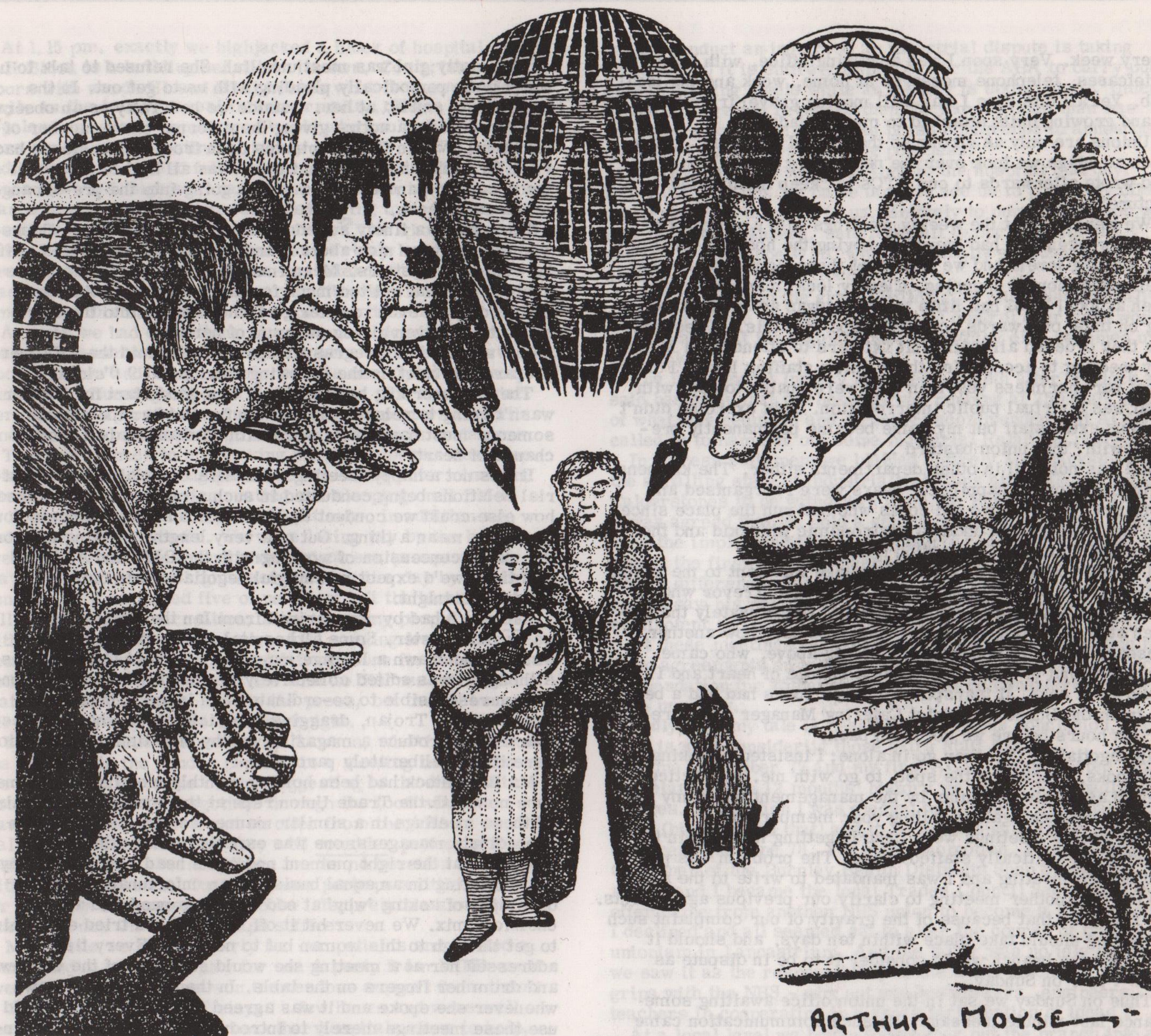
So we went to town. We called a press conference in the local pub and newsmen from the *Sun*, *Mirror* and *Mail* and all the rest got disgustingly drunk as we gave out our problems to the world. We'd worked on the statement all the previous night and had it planned down and checked to the last detail. We even had Sally there in her uniform who agreed to cross her legs at strategic points in the conference!

We announced to the world the results of staff shortages and cuts, our patients dying and being burned. That afternoon we were to call another mass meeting and ask staff to agree to a motion calling for one week's notice of walk outs unless the DMT came up with concrete proposals.

That evening all the locals had mopped up the story in solid black headlines and the next morning the nationals devoted a few columns to the 'horror hospital' and 'Patients die in staff starved hospital'. This, coupled with a resounding vote for a week's notice of walk outs that afternoon, was too much for the powers that be. The Area Health Authority stepped in and asked for an urgent meeting at Preston. Now the AHA is really big potatoes, based in a converted hotel overlooking the railway station; its five floors are responsible for running health services throughout Lancashire.

Again a massive boardroom with all the same people there plus additional big time AHA. We dominated the meeting with eight stewards and really we had the AHA by the knackers. We demanded and got immediate extra staff for nights, an independent inquiry into staffing levels and weekly meetings with local management to identify and solve critically staffed areas. Things certainly looked rosy.

The next day we called a meeting of all shop stewards and elected our side of the inquiry. Out of this meeting we formed the Calderstones Joint Shop Stewards Committee (to get to grips with the situation). Beset with problems from the start



- COHSE FTOs refused to recognise it as did management, we excluded the Royal College of Nurses on the grounds of them being a joke organisation - but a fragile cohesiveness was held under the banner of working together as trade unionists.

Our agreement with AHA soon fell into difficulties although the thing was down in black and white. At the newly formed weekly meeting with local management we quickly fell into difficulties over interpretation. Management wanted the meetings to develop into cosy chats over long term policy. They were unwilling to be pushed into employing extra staff to cover understaffed wards as we had agreed. We learned much later that the AHA had forbade them to do any such thing - though no one had the gumption to tell us that, even our FTOs.

Our agreement on the inquiry was that it should be formed from two union and two management nominations with a mutually acceptable chairman. As reported we had chosen our two lads and suggested a good chairman all within 24 hours. Alas the AHA interpreted the agreement differently. After much toing and froing I eventually received a long letter from the AHA insisting that the inquiry should be formed of two management representatives only.

This was really too much when coupled with our growing frustration at local level. But what could we do? We'd been very cleverly out-manoeuvred by some very clever politicking. The novelty of mass meetings was wearing thin and criticism was coming from the wards that the ballot had achieved nothing.

Thus we started to plan what was to become known as 'imaginative Industrial Action'. Our plan was to take over Ms Blackstock's office and stay there until we received positive assurances from the AHA. We had a 'shock group' of six stewards and were well loaded with food and a banner to fly from her window. Our difficulty arose in finding a spirited feminist (we were taking a small chemical toilet and a screen for Ms B.); our soundings were somehow leaked to the authorities who greeted the threat with such apparent alarm that we were offered an immediate reconvened meeting. A pity really, I'd always wanted to have a long chat with the lady.

At that meeting we got and agreed the terms for a full blown inquiry and official letters were sent out that day to our nominees.

Alack, difficulties were being experienced in taking our FTOs along with us and I suppose it was about time that we decided in future we'd sort the job out ourselves. Indeed our skills as negotiators were improving by the minute. My fear of anyone and everyone had long ago fluttered out of the window. I'd gotten to know all of the local journalists on a personal level and I was more or less retained by Radio Blackburn to comment on health service affairs. The media prefer spokespeople to be able to give short snappy heavily biased comments off the cuff. Such a spokesperson was I.

I began to rise in the Trade Union world. Elections to Trades Councils, committees and outside meetings took place

every week. Very soon I was a walking office, with files, briefcases, telephone messages at home, work and the local pub. Yet all this time I was still moving gravel from A to B and growing quite attached to my five lads.

Unions are only as strong as their local branches. Under such an adage we took over the negotiating for the hospital and wrote afterwards to our FTOs to "keep them in the picture".

We were back at the weekly meetings with a vengeance. Every weekend we had stewards roving the hospital monitoring staffing levels and we'd present these figures to management each Monday morning. Clearly local managers, who even at local level had little idea what was actually happening on their own wards, couldn't cope with this. In desperation they ordered all their Unit Officers to attend each Monday meeting to account for their Unit's staffing level. For the most part harmless yes-men they were unable to deal with what was a virtual public interrogation. This exercise didn't earn us extra staff but my name became permanently prefixed with "that union bastard ..."

All was not well in other departments either. The kitchens which had worked happily for years were reorganised and work studied. The two old cooks who had run the place since the war were placed under a gastronomic whizzkid and the place had rumbling indigestion from then on.

I recall one morning when a message was sent to me asking for my presence at the kitchens. Sam asked Trevor who ruled no if it were for union business. Unfortunately the kitchen staff then walked out en masse and somehow another message was sent to Trevor from way above, who came running round to tell me he'd had a change of heart and I could go at once. It transpired that the cooks had had a bellyful from the Burnley District Catering Manager and were out for six hours before we got them back.

In negotiating I'd never go in alone; I insisted on taking two cooks, elected on the spot, to go with me. A practice viewed as highly irregular by the management but in my view the only defence against selling your members out.

The weekly meetings were clearly getting nowhere in improving our critically staffed areas. The problem was put to our branch meeting and I was mandated to write to the AHA asking for another meeting to clarify our previous agreements. We reasoned that because of the gravity of our complaint such a meeting should take place within ten days, and should it not, then the branch would consider it to be in dispute as from 4 pm. on Sunday.

Thus on Sunday we sat in the union office awaiting some chance last minute message. No such communication came and at 4 pm. we entered into dispute.

The North West Regional Health Authority (really big potatoes this) occupies a massive office block leading up to Manchester's Piccadilly station. Just inside its imposing glass fronted entrance is a smallish kiosk where a very pretty receptionist sits greeting arriving dignitaries and asking them to sit down in the plush waiting area.

Dead on nine o'clock on Monday morning four of us occupied that kiosk.

Now there's a knack to occupying reception kiosks. Firstly you must be all well dressed, it's no good looking like a muppet with long hair and jeans; it creates too much alarm. You mustn't falter even for a second. We simply walked straight in with a cherry "good morning" to the receptionist and stood in a cramped line behind her. It took exactly 21 seconds from entering the building. Peter (a Spanish ward orderly, ex CNT and weighing 18 stones) kept his hand on the door handle which ensured the place a no-go area.

Well the pretty girl was outraged. Utterly devoid she screamed at us to get out. She rang 'Security' and a man came running down threatening us with damnation if we didn't leave immediately. I just kept repeating very calmly, "We are Trades Unionists in dispute with Lancashire AHA and we shall not leave until we have a date for a meeting with them", and gave him a sweet smile. Off he went and we remained saying "good morning" to all the arriving office workers.

The pretty girl was most unhelpful. She refused to talk to us apart from periodically pleading with us to get out. In the end we just smiled at her. Outside we had Taffy as an observer and I held up a notice giving the external phone number of the kiosk. Within fifteen minutes John from Calderstones had rung through announcing that there was all hell to pay about the occupation and that he was just going into the pre-arranged press conference.

Down came a finely suited Scotsman from the upper floors who was all very nice about it and asked what we wanted. Off he went back upstairs. Meantime the gentlemen of the press arrived and that got too much for the pretty girl. She was relieved by an even prettier girl who entered into the spirit of the thing, even giving us a sup of her tea.

Down came McKneegrasper again and he said the AHA were prepared to meet us the following morning at 9 o'clock.

The next morning hardly got off to a good start for Trevor wasn't going to release me from duty. But by nine o'clock someone must have had a word with him and he had another change of heart.

It was not a happy meeting. The AHA complained of industrial relations being conducted in such a manner and we asked how else could we conduct them if letters and agreements don't appear to mean a thing. Out of a very lengthy meeting we won the major concession of working with the DMT and AHA and told them we'd expect meaningful negotiations to commence within a fortnight.

Info no. 6 had by now arrived from Ian the Printer and it was a blockbuster. Some 30 hospital staff had typed, glued, written and drawn a 16-page magazine all about Calderstones. Although it was edited collectively we found it best to hold one person responsible to co-ordinate each issue. Chris had worked like a Trojan, dragging in articles from the strangest quarters to produce a magazine worthy of national distribution were it not deliberately parochial.

Ms Blackstock had been holding monthly meetings for some time now with the Trade Union reps at the hospital. She chaired these meetings in a similar manner as her meetings with subordinate managers: one was expected to sit attentively, listen and at the right moment nod one's head. My philosophy of negotiating on an equal basis and an unfortunate habit I developed of asking 'why' at odd moments produced a poor chemical mix. We never hit it off. COHSE had tried everything to get through to this woman but to no avail. Every time I addressed her at a meeting she would stare out of the window and drum her fingers on the table. In the end I used to yawn whenever she spoke and it was agreed that the Branch should use these meetings merely to introduce new stewards to management.

We asked Sammy and Mike to go to the next meeting. It reflects well on their calibre as stewards to say that they got up and walked out after 20 minutes.

Ms B. had announced without a by your leave, that because of further cuts the nursing staff was to be reduced by 19!

In addition the agreement reached with AHA on reallocating resources was to be confined merely to moving around existing nursing staff. Our 'interpretation' as she called it, for opening the books and seeing where the money was actually going, was not acceptable, it was management's right to manage ...

An emergency meeting of the Executive was summoned within the hour. The next day we had 1000 leaflets going round the hospital calling for a mass meeting the following week. That leaflet really laid it on the line. It bitterly attacked the other unions for leaving everything to COHSE and nodding through management rubbish. New members came in droves, in one day alone there were 50 resignations from other unions and by the day of the mass meeting our membership stood at over 800.

At the mass meeting we stated simply, "Trust your executive, we have something up our sleeves, it will not affect patient care. Give us a mandate to carry on". We got that mandate on Wednesday lunchtime.

By now we had learned the lessons of secrecy and we gathered 16 trusted souls together. Come Friday lunchtime we were all gathered in the union office with strange bundles.

At 1.15 pm. exactly we highjacked a block of hospital wards.

H Block is a building set out on its own. Comprising two floors with wards H1 and H2 it houses what is known colloquially as the 'worst cases' in subnormality. These are the hopeless wrecks of humanity. People who couldn't speak, were continually incontinent, highly overactive, self-injurious and in the main needed full 24-hour care and attention. We chose the word 'highjack' carefully. They are building aeroplanes to run without pilots; are they trying to do the same in hospitals and run wards without nurses? The whole block had been allocated three staff to run from Friday lunchtime right through until Monday lunchtime - we intended to man the place with what we saw as proper staffing levels until such time as the District agreed to remove the threatened cutbacks.

As ever we had everything planned out in detail. Doors were guarded, banners made from sheets were unfurled from the top floor windows and Tony politely (as was our style) informed the Central Nursing Office of the highjack. The kitchen staff were quickly appraised and agreed with the porters that all food would be passed through the ward window in containers.

There is a knack to highjacking hospital blocks. Most importantly you need staying power and mulchlike determination. Remember we were living, eating and sleeping on H Block 24 hours a day, and caring for 46 patients. In addition we had press, TV and radio. We were losing pay by the hour, pressures from wives, husbands and career prospects all played a part in some highjackers calling it a day by the first Sunday. As it happened five of us never left the block for the full 13 days of the occupation, although many people stayed with us off and on for varying periods ranging from half an hour to eight days. Management left us alone for the weekend with an 'it's not the policy of the AHA to discuss internal matters with the media ...' to the press, but the oil burned very late in many offices that first night.

Monday the AHA summoned Mr Lawson, who'd read about the highjack in the Sunday papers, to a meeting in Preston. We refused to leave the block, suggesting to the AHA that we would be prepared to negotiate through the food window. Lawson rings up later to put an offer from the AHA to us: Call off the occupation and they will consider paying us the lost time through absence; there can be no question of the AHA withdrawing the cuts. Our reply was perhaps a little strong for a family newspaper but a loose interpretation along the lines of 'Fuck Off' will perhaps suffice.

Meanwhile we threw a party for our patients and invited a local band to come and play for us. A party from MIND came over from Leeds and we won tremendous support from them. A delegation from NWAf stayed a few hours and were well received. Shop stewards from other hospitals came to help, telegrams of support, endless press visits and calls from a Marxist abbreviation (I forget which) who seemed somewhat offended that we wouldn't sign up with them on the spot. For years at Calderstones we've had a little old lady who would come in to the hospital unpaid and teach our patients to read; she'd also play the church organ on Sunday. She said that our actions were so humble and sincere in the eyes of Christ that she felt she had to share the burden with us - and promptly moved in. Her staying power for someone in her late sixties, roughing it on a couple of blankets in the linen cupboard is courage that deserves not to go unrecorded.

Alack, we fell foul of our local hospital manager. With our guard relaxed on the evening of Day 4 the man saunters in, does a very swift inspection, makes some sarcastic comments to the incumbent staff, then disappears. A letter is despatched to him pointing out that any doctor can walk in when they wished to see a patient. Such a right (after all, H Block is our home as well) certainly did not extend to nursing managers. A reply was asked for by 10.30 the next morning, agreeing to this principle; otherwise, the dispute would be escalated. No reply was received. Thus at 11 pm. we stopped the catering staff from bringing tea and biscuits to their offices. Not perhaps the most alarming escalation in the history of industrial disputes but the press did wonders with it. He never came back for another visit.

The dispute ended by courtesy of the Independent Inquiry, sitting for the second time on Day 13 of the highjack. They demanded to see the Chairman of the AHA and said a) we

cannot conduct an inquiry if an industrial dispute is taking place and b) it is entirely improper for the AHA to carry out cuts in staffing levels while an inquiry is taking place. Unless a) and b) were not reversed then the inquiry chairman was prepared to call an immediate press conference to announce the end of the inquiry as being pointless.

Mr Lawson made his first visit to the hospital that day. Day 13 at 1.45 pm. he came down to see us to put newly offered terms from the AHA to us. Entirely to our satisfaction we took down our banners, said farewell to our patients and retired to Clitheroe WMC where, literally exhausted, we drank of Lancashire's finest.

Back to work on the gravel train again which seemed silly somehow. Once you have tasted total control over your work - which was what the highjack was - anything else becomes unpalatable.

The Independent Inquiry reported a month after H Block and said basically that the hospital was running at 250 staff short of what was required and strongly recommended that ACAS be called in to hammer out some Industrial Relations procedures.

In a press statement we blamed entirely Ms Blackstock for the appalling state of industrial relations and called again for Calderstones to be withdrawn from the Burnley Health District. It was agreed that we hold a series of working parties to discuss the implementation of the inquiry recommendations. It was at the first of these meetings that I met Bob Quick, Christ what a difference. A junior FTO, the elders having given us up, he saw his role as an advisor to his members and not some omnipotent god who had his members safely under control.

At these meetings we agreed to call ACAS in. We made interim agreements on industrial relation matters and the recommendation for 250 extra staff would be considered by the AHA urgently.

Sadly, for my tale is reaching an obvious conclusion, the AHA is still considering those extra staff today.

Come December '77 and my first AGM, I was elected Branch Secretary. With 12 months' history we hadn't done badly for novices. In addition I was elected to COHSE's Regional Executive (big potatoes that) and to be the delegate at the national conference in June '78. Yet more promotion, I was elected Chairman of the Burnley Health Districts Shop Stewards Committee and I became the local Trades Council Secretary. An offer came from another NHS union to become a FTO which I declined and all seemed set to alter the course of trade unionism in Lancashire. And the latter was no idle boast; we saw it as the responsibility of the trade unions to get to grips with the NHS - why not use busworkers, engineers, teachers in cooperating in a cross fertilisation of ideas?

At a local level we began to hammer out the branch into a living entity. As we saw it a centre of free thought and imagination. We offered free education courses to our members. We roped in local firms to give us discounts. The TUC runs a travel club offering ultra cheap holidays. We got all our student nurses cut price rail cards. Working through the Trades Council we got a couple of engineering apprentices to convert a NHS wheelchair into a simple mechanically operated machine, which they did at a twentieth of the MRP. Two of our stewards worked (albeit unsuccessfully) on a research project to convert all the administrative offices into patients' living quarters, moving the managers into an open plan office complex. We started an under fives play group and initiated and led a Tenants Association that was to win some major concessions in tied crown property.

February '78 and the AHA announced that they were withdrawing the nurses assisted travel schemes. Calderstones was one of four large mental hospitals in the area, all of them miles away from population centres, and to encourage unpaid staff they had for years run a scheme whereby a percentage of a nurse's busfare was met by the AHA. We met as shop stewards from all four hospitals and wrote to the AHA demanding a meeting within 10 days. Predictably no reply was received, so one sunny morning 33 stewards from each hospital occupied the foyer of Lancashire AHA's plush office block. Unfortunately the musical instruments, accordian, mouth organs and much percussion, with which we planned to 'entertain' the office workers got forgotten somewhere. We left after three hours with firm dates for negotiations without

FTOs and uncontaminated without the presence of the RCN.

Round about March 78 a minor but important development took place. Local management announced that in future shop stewards requiring time off to attend to union business should seek permission from their unit officers and not their immediate superiors. In effect this meant that I should ask permission from Trevor and not Sam who had by now given up on me.

Trevor approached his new found task with the zeal of a senior boy scout leader. Each request became a major investigation and things rapidly became hairy between us.

We approached management about the change in an agreed procedure and they claimed it wasn't a 'change' but an 'interpretation' and were therefore able to make the move safely. Such is the nonsense of TU/management jargon. We appealed to the next line in the hierarchy, Ms B. who totally agreed with the new interpretation, but kindly consented to pass the appeal up to the AHA.

By now really strange things were beginning to happen. My local manager called me into his office, to be precise at 4.15 pm on 22 May 1978, and quietly warned me to be extremely careful over my trade union activities, particularly those relating to time off, as the Burnley District Management Team were after my blood.

Tony, our branch Chairman, foolishly overstayed a lunch-break by an hour, which he admitted to his Union Officer on his return. The following day he was up on a disciplinary charge and was demoted and thrown off his ward. We began to receive reports from members that several Royal College nurses were reporting COHSE stewards activities and conversations to management. Two stewards were told not to apply for promotional posts because of their union allegiance.

Four officers were now present from ACAS and although they were experts at discretion and listening, they let it be known that they were alarmed at the level of harassment taking place.

ACAS's technique is to listen to management and stewards and eventually fit them into a ready made set of procedures. They are loath to report on anything that one side will see as contentious, lest that side reject the report in total. By now wise to committees and earnest young chaps in suits we wrote them off as a dead loss long before the eventual report was published.

My personal fortunes were faring no better. The gravel was finally finished and I was set to work constructing a perimeter path around a nine acre field with my lads. Things took an interesting turn when I discovered quite by chance that Trevor had for months been submitting reports to higher management that read, "Mr Good's patients returned to the wards because he is again on union activities". Each report failed to mention that on each occasion I had been granted permission and it was either Sam's or Trevor's managerial decision to return the lads to their wards.

Equally, Trevor was being supplied with information for a higher source. For instance, I'd return from a meeting with the District Management Team eight miles away in Burnley, and he'd call me into his office and demand to know why I hadn't returned at 1.30 instead of 2 o'clock because the union de-briefing had finished at midday.

He'd also begun calling in my work colleagues - swearing them to secrecy and asking them to sign a prepared statement on my union activities. The second nurse he got to sign came and told me and I subsequently won a copy of it through the Grievance Procedure. It remains in my possession today as a living example of juvenile nonsense.

All this happening within the space of a fortnight was really too much. We published yet another 1000 leaflets that accused management of blatant harassment against COHSE stewards, inviting all members to attend the next branch meeting; we'd place the full facts as we saw them before the pleasure of the assembled branch.

Tony returned in the meantime from the appeal on permission for time off with the Area Health Authority who had ruled that the interpretation on consent for time off was 'non-negotiable'.

At the branch meeting it was proposed that as equal partners in a joint agreement we should take a leaf from management's book and adopt our own interpretation on the Time-Off Proceed-

ure. Thus a letter was sent to management on 7 June 78 (and take note of these dates, they get important) saying that should a Steward require time off he or she should INFORM their immediate superior that they were going off. As such we were in dispute with management.

Now let's digress a little. As reported I was elected as a delegate to the COHSE National Conference which was to be held in Scarborough the third week in June. Now Scarborough is 113 miles from Calderstones and I know, for I walked every inch of the way. For some months I'd been pacing the lanes of Lancashire in training for my four day trek - and Christ was I looking forward to it. Every single day since that original AGM I'd spent some period of time in the hospital. I looked on the walk as some sort of psychological enema and I loved every minute of it. Across Lancashire and Yorkshire by day and at night I drank myself senseless in some b+b pub. Each mile was sponsored in aid of the union benevolent fund.

I'd always wondered how union conferences could attract such large numbers while more humble movements had relatively only a handful. The answer's simple. Each delegate is paid a handsome backhander.

I was paid £10 a day plus rail fares for the wife and kids - it was our first holiday in nine years of wedded bliss. And by Allah I wasn't alone, union conferences are made up of folk who annually holiday for a week at some such resort and receive a paid holiday on behalf of the union.

So the conference gave me a standing ovation for the walk - it was soon to know me better. I was up and down like a bridegroom's bum off that speaker's rostrum. I spoke for this and against that and was singularly successful in getting my own resolution through, amidst furious debate, in getting COHSE to actively work towards Joint TUC affiliated union committees. I laid it on the line about having to work with such useless groups as the Royal College of Retired Nurses and the Association of Superannuated Chiropodists. All of which means little to the outside world but it meant that COHSE had taken a more radical turn. For my troubles I was heavily slagged in the national nursing press of June/July 78. But by then I had other problems.

Returning from conference (by train this time) I'm informed that no COHSE steward had met with any problem in taking time off. Even Christ, whose pedantic loyalty to democratic union decisions, had informed his Unit Officer on 8 June what action he was required to take, had remained unscathed. Monday morning 26 June I arrive back at work. I've been moved off the gangs and put into a classroom teaching patients basic reading skills. Paranoics amongst you will notice that the classroom is next to Trevor's office. Come 11.30 I see to it that my patients are fine, ask the nurse in the next class to keep an eye on them, inform the Sister in charge that I'm off on union business and go off to attend the Monday meeting with management.

On my return Trevor is furious and I politely (as is my style) inform him that under the terms of the dispute I am required to INFORM and not ask. He moves me back to the gangs. Throughout the rest of the week I, with the other stewards, am left untouched. I simply inform Sam that I'm off and I go. At the time we didn't attach too much importance to management's attitude to us. We thought they'd merely make a few preliminary noises and let the dispute drift into nothing pending the ACAS report. It was not to be.

The following Monday (3 July) Tony, the branch Chairman, returns from his holiday and both of us inform our immediate superiors that we are going off to attend the weekly meeting with management.

After that meeting ends I am waiting outside the boardroom to meet the District Catering Manager about the latest hiccup in the kitchens. This meeting had been convened under the agreed Grievance Procedure. As I wait up pops the Personnel Manager with a letter for me from Ms Blackstock - You have been reported absent from duty and I am stopping your pay for the period of time in question - that's it, no right of appeal, no hearing, no nothing.

Still, in with Catering Manager but within ten minutes in

bursts a Personnel Officer who states she has orders to close this meeting immediately as management 'will not be a party to false pretences'.

I summon an emergency Executive meeting. The lot of us have had a bellyful of this. Thus, at 3 pm, in front of all the other stewards, I telephone the head Personnel Officer and tell him that COHSE is withdrawing from all agreed procedures, viz: the Grievance Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure, all meetings and committees. I also write to him confirming our telephone conversation and making enough copies to give to each steward. That letter is on his desk first thing Tuesday morning.

That Tuesday afternoon myself and Tony are simultaneously handed letters telling us to attend a disciplinary hearing, clearly emphasising it is to be held under the auspices of the disciplinary procedure, on Thursday, to explain why we had been absent from work while we had been attending a meeting with them.

Wednesday evening (5 July) is our regular branch meeting and there's about 40 in attendance. We put the developments to them and they vote to support the Executive decision to withdraw from procedures and agree that under the terms of the dispute the Branch Secretary and Chairman cannot attend the hearings the following day.

Come Thursday at 3 pm, and a phone call from Tony. He had just been ordered to attend the Nursing Manager's office; he went and found a whole posse of them there. Asked to explain why he was 'late' for his hearing, he reiterates the Branch's letter of 3 July and leaves.

Half an hour after my hearing is due to start I'm instructed my phone to come to the office immediately.

"No sir".

"Then I am informing you that you are suspended from duty from this moment and you are to leave the premises at once".

"Thank you" (as is my style).

Tony gets similar treatment and we meet up at my place for a stiff bottle of Bells and await developments.

Now get this. Within minutes of us being suspended management have sent out leaflets to every ward and department in the hospital (itself a mammoth administrative task); these leaflets 'appraise staff of the facts'. Equally management call one person of each ward to a mass meeting where they are again 'appraised of the facts' and sent back to the wards.

Elsewhere in the hospital the Executive call an emergency meeting and they call a mass meeting of the whole hospital for Wednesday, 12 July. Management are informed about this the next morning. That afternoon we both get sent registered letters telling us to attend further disciplinary hearings (to explain why we had refused to attend the day before). These hearings are to be held on Tuesday, 11 July.

In come our senior FTOs who advise us most strongly to attend these meetings. We bitterly disagree saying that only our members can reverse a branch decision, and the earliest that could be done is Wednesday.

Well the press went to town on this. Our pictures were blasted from the headlines above an extensive summary of the hospital's industrial history. Calderstones was dubbed as having the worst industrial relations record in the North West. Our house was turned into an HQ. The phone literally danced 24 hours a day. Visitors, stewards, meetings, press, bottles and bottles of plonk.

The Executive call in Bob Howard, Secretary of the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils, and asked him to mediate in the matter. Now Bob's a straight guy, as honest as they come and an expert on Industrial Relations. His report of the mediation with management is worth recording if only to illustrate to quality and integrity of NHS management.

Halfway through his meeting with management a Personnel Officer bubbles out, "... we think Good is being backed by a political group". He is immediately interrupted by the other managers present with a, "You'd better keep quiet about that".

At the end of his meeting Bob is told, "We cannot agree to a postponement of the Tuesday hearings but we will give you an assurance that there will be no hasty action, no sackings".

Come Tuesday and we do not attend the hearings as requested by our members. Wednesday all the hospital is waiting for the lunchtime meeting, the porters had filled the hall with

chairs and the electricians had rigged up a PA system. Two hours before the meeting is due to start management again leaflet the hospital. This leaflet informs everyone that they have sacked us.

There is furious debate within the Executive about taking the hospital over immediately. Alas Eddie Lawson arrives for the mass meeting and it is made known to us under no account must we enter hospital premises. We do not attend that meeting.

Now one must go back to my earlier thoughts on eloquent people swaying a mob. Eddie was playing games. He spent 40 minutes passionately spouting his own innocence in the affair. He pleaded for the branch to allow him to fight our dismissals through the correct channels and that he would fight to the end for our reinstatement.

And that chums, carried the day, despite some bitter hacking, it was resolved that the two dismissed officials should appeal against sackings.

And really that's the end of my little tale. The decision of the meeting was more than a disaster for just us two. It saw the end of trade unionism at Calderstones. A lot of very sincere people got frightened off or eventually threw in their lot with management. But perhaps more of that anon.

In all we battled through five levels of appeal. Here's a brief resume.

Interim Relief Is a little known section of the Employment Protection Act whereby a FTO of a union can apply for immediate reinstatement for a shop steward if he can convince an Industrial Tribunal barrister that it seems likely that the dismissal was due to trade union activities. That hearing took place 10 days after our dismissals as is required under the EPA. Eddie Lawson and his deputy were called in with management into 'chambers' to put our case forward. Some short time later out pops Eddie's deputy who puts to us a request from the barrister that we should withdraw our case and go for a full Industrial Tribunal because a) he does not think our dismissals were due to trade union activities and b) he said that management have an extremely difficult case to prove and he strongly advised them to reach some sort of settlement before a Tribunal hearing. Naturally we withdrew our applications. Later, when it was too late, the FTO in question denied that he ever said such things to us.

Appeal to the Area Health Authority is hardly worth reporting on. Eddie gave a brilliant emotional speech that seemed to constitute an apology more than anything else. We lost.

It was soon after the AHA appeal fiasco that the jigsaw started to take shape. Eddie was required to submit a full report to COHSE's National Executive Committee on the events surrounding our dismissals. This report was judged by the NEC to be so blatantly biased that they despatched a National Officer to investigate the matter. His investigations won us each a union 'victimisation award' of £1000. One began to hear disturbing rumours that Eddie had worked a deal with the AHA that our employment was not only an embarrassment to them but to the union as well. Among his trusted confidants he told two people too many that "COHSE would be better off without those two".

I sent COHSE a polite letter saying that it would be in everyone's interest if I conducted our defence personally at the forthcoming Industrial Tribunal. Now this letter upset them for some reason. Here was a major case that was all the rage amongst management and staff throughout the North West and the defendants had dropped their union. The letter soured already tense relations to such an extent that we ended up fighting COHSE as well as management.

So I set to work. Days and days spent in the legal departments of various libraries. Long bus rides to lobby respected Trade Unionists, nearly all of whom helped immensely. I wrote and rewrote draft after draft of opening statements, statements of case and closing addresses.

In the best traditions of British justice Tribunals take months to arrive and ours was no exception. But first let's have an undercover look at these Tribunals. They sit to hear cases mainly about unfair dismissals. Led by a barrister as Chairman and flanked by a trade union and employer nominee, their

task is to determine whether a dismissal was fair and reasonable under all the circumstances. The trade union nominee is the amusing post. All unions are required to submit a list of nominations to the Secretary of State who then selects appropriate nominations. In practice almost all posts go to retired FTOs and competition for a place on a Tribunal is fierce amongst ageing TU men and women.

In my time I attended some two dozen Tribunals as an observer, witness or advocate. Only twice did I come up against 'useful' Trade Union bench members. Two reasons make these posts plum jobs. The first is accountability. They are accountable to no-one. Two years ago the North West TUC were refused access to a list of all TU Tribunal members serving in Lancashire on the grounds of it not being in the public interest. Not to be outdone a sympathetic MP obtained the register. The most startling discovery was that the Secretary of State classed the National Farmers Union as a Trade Union! NWTUC planned to hold a private meeting of these people to put forward mounting concern over the conduct of TU nominees at Tribunals. It says much for these folk when over a third refused to attend on the grounds that it would not serve the best interests of justice ... And the second reason is the job itself. A day that starts at 10 am, finishes at 4.30 with two hours for lunch and, depending on very generous travelling expenses, produces a fat fee of £50 per day - well, everyone has their price and what better way to while away your days as a tame rabbit on a barristers' bench.

Slightly under one third of applications to a Tribunal (and I'm working from the TUC Industrial Law Review) result in a favourable result to the employee. And even if the poor sod should 'win' they are likely to receive £643 on average by way of compensation. Equally it's interesting to note and draw lessons from who actually uses Tribunals. Certainly not the tightly organised smaller unions. NATSOPA, SOGAT, the miners and the dockers hardly figure in the reams of legal books on Industrial Law. By far the greatest users are those unions with little industrial muscle. The public sector, the shopworkers, clerical staff and places of work where union branches are weak.

Latterly there are a fair number of people who turn up and defend themselves. Classed in several expensively published guidebooks for company executives as "oddballs, mavericks and timewasters who see their own case as a lifelong crusade".

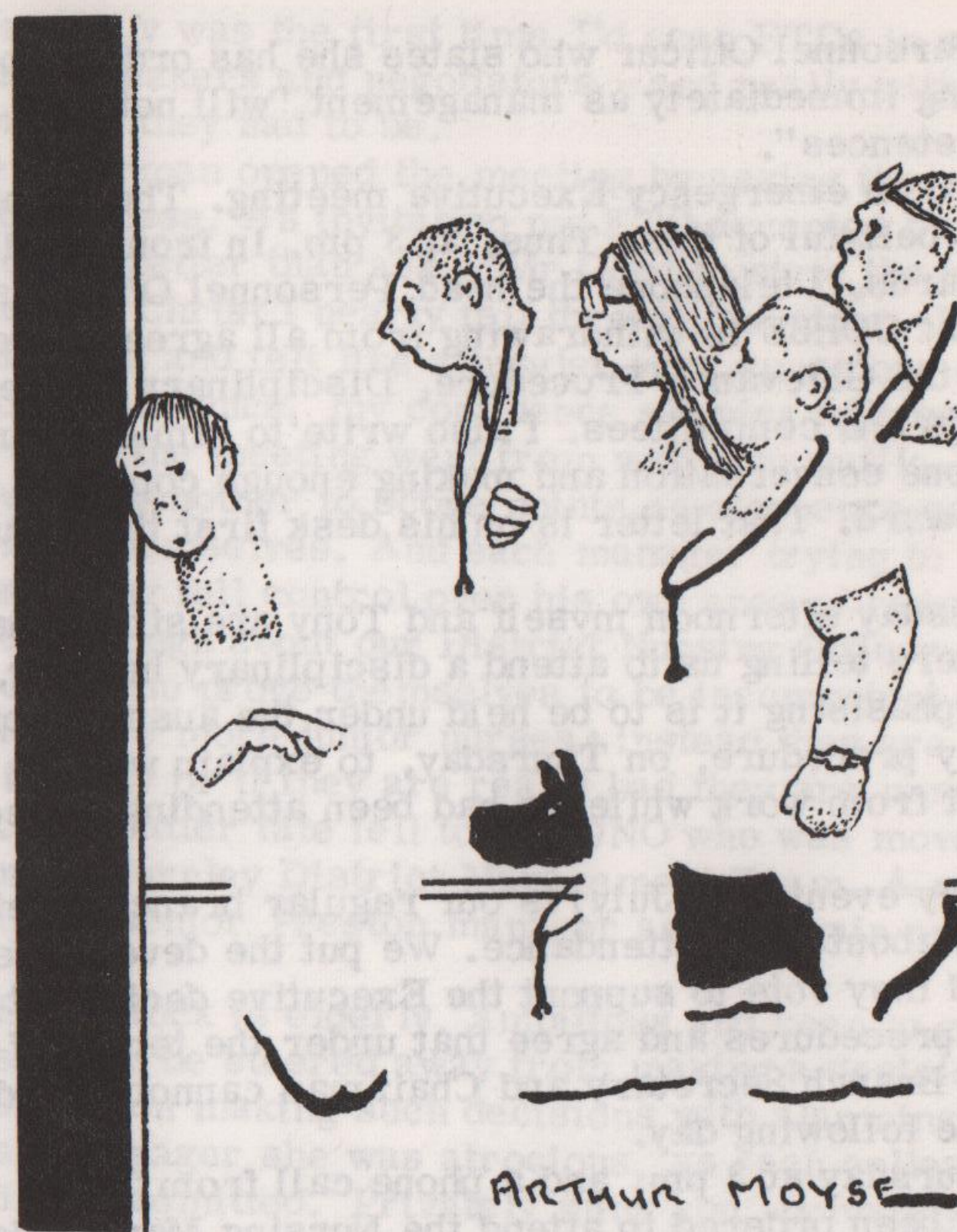
Into such a category were placed your heroes, albeit tacitly, by the bench.

A crammed Tribunal hearing. A barrister in the chair who we discovered had just returned from South Africa as a circuit judge; to his left sat a very tame rabbit indeed - he hardly uttered a word throughout.

We based our case on three points:

1. That some other substantial reason lay behind our dismissals.
2. That we had been selected for dismissal while taking part in an industrial dispute. viz: ALL COHSE members had withdrawn from agreed procedures when we were placed on disciplinary charges.
3. Our dismissals were unfair and unreasonable under all the circumstances.

Well, we didn't stand a chance. I'd presumed that one should keep to polite, straightforward, honest questions and statements. How wrong I was. Management lied and lied through their teeth. If they didn't lie then they 'couldn't quite remember' or 'I must have been away at that time' or 'I don't know'. Throughout they were propped up by the chairman, who from time to time would throw in the odd biased remark, cut short questions and declare things I saw as being totally crucial as merely irrelevant. It took all day for management to present its case and for me to cross-examine them. Then the Chairman called a halt announcing that a resumed hearing will be held at a future date. A future date turned out to be four crippling months away; by that time our dole had run out and uncomfortable pressures were enaming from the SS.



'This gentleman's one of the healing profession's greatest tragedies—a hypochondriac who's allergic to medicine!'

Come the resumed hearing and management had done their homework very carefully. Only two Personnel Officers were present for their side, effectively preventing me from recalling essential witnesses. Even Ms Blackstock (whom I'd subpoenaed on a witness order) failed to arrive because I had not observed a minor legal technicality. My argument that I wasn't aware of such technicalities carried no weight with our friend on the bench. There then followed what the local press described as "a series of clashes" between myself and the bench, whereby I was implying dirty tactics on the part of the managers and he began to threaten me with costs should I demand an adjournment. He knew damn well that we could afford neither the time nor the costs.

Further 'clashes' occurred when the bench refused to accept ACAS's lengthy report on Calderstones as evidence. Much of this report contained direct observations on COHSE and the fact that management objected bitterly to me referring to the ACAS report perhaps illustrates which side the report favoured. How the hell do you prove to a court that you have been dismissed for trade union activities when they refuse to consider observations like "... management were trying to compromise (and perhaps hinder) the COHSE Branch Secretary ..." (See ACAS Report on Calderstones Hospital 1978). When it became obvious that we would have no alternative to withdraw from the trial, he accepted the report. But we battled through with our witnesses, carefully producing verbal and written evidence that I felt (and still do) proved management were corrupt, dishonest and not worth a post on a third rate quango. Perhaps the saddest aspect happened towards the closing of the trial; I say 'sad' because I no longer feel angry about it. It became evident that COHSE had briefed management on one or two minor items of interest. Ah well, life must go on I suppose.

At the end of the trial I submitted a nine page written summing up. It was the result of ten months' painstaking research - at the very least it deserved consideration. At the end we retired to the waiting room while the bench went to consider its verdict. It took them all of 20 minutes. In retrospect I don't know what we were hoping for as we sucked at our bottle of plonk but one holds on to straws.

The Tribunal found that we had been dismissed fairly, that we were guilty of attached an inflated importance to our positions as branch officials and that we and our witnesses had been lying.

That night I sat slumped in our old battered armchair, took the phone off its hook while Sue found enough for a bottle of Scotch and I sat through the night right up until the postman delivered a curt letter from the hospital administrator giving us a month's notice to find other accommodation.

BLACKLISTED

Your average working man cannot wait ten months for a trial and live on dole. True we each had our £1000 but that rapidly got divided up between electricity bills, trips to campaign meetings, legal libraries, research lobbying and a rainy day fund. The dole was quite sympathetic-their advice to me was that I should get out of Lancashire as quickly as possible. Going for a job was a joke. Apart from applying for nursing posts I applied for a total of 26 labouring/unskilled vacancies over an 11 month period.

There is no law that says a company must employ you. A fact of life that allows personnel officers to open up and be honest with you. Remember that I was Ribbles Valley's Trades Council Secretary and my name had been featured in the local media more often than Blackburn Rovers' Manager had. Really, going for an interview was a farce. But I tried, Christ, I tried. An interview for a job bagging up caustic soda crystals lasted an hour and a half while I discussed the merits of the Employment Protection Act with some finely suited Personnel chap. In the end he shrugged his shoulders and said I'd stand a better chance if I were an ex-prisoner. The Garage owners face, whose expression I'll never forget, when I suggested that I'd be the ideal person to man his petrol pumps. He told me very politely, "Look piss off, mate." The haulage company that rejected me with a "No thanks we're a non-union shop here."

Each interview went on and on like that. In the end I became convinced that I must be a very dangerous person indeed.

Tony has perhaps fared worse than I. While I had dipped my oar in most things, he had only his nursing certificate. Since our dismissals he has applied for nursing jobs in all four corners of Christendom-he's not even secured a single interview in any hospital. It has been made known to me, indirectly, but authoritatively enough, that I'll never work as a nurse in the NHS again.

But the decision of the Industrial Tribunal began to needle me. I began to lose sleep over it-even several pints wouldn't remove nagging questions and glaring inconsistencies. I decided to go one rung up the ladder and make an appeal to a Crown Court on the Tribunal decision.

Tony's disillusionment with British justice was complete and after lengthy discussion over several jars he opted to have no further truck with future charades.

Now, Appeal Courts are essentially the province of black suited barristers and the Law Society discourages mavericks (as I found out later) from attending. I popped round to the nearest solicitor in an attempt to secure myself a brief in a wig. The practice referred me to its most junior partner who turned out to be most helpful but blissfully ignorant of matters industrial. He wrote off and secured quite easily a date for a Crown Court hearing-5 July 1979-the real problem arose in getting a decision from the Law Society for me to be represented. My solicitor wrote several times asking for a decision even to the extent of submitting an emergency application.

That process took the best part of three months. Two days before the actual hearing we received a polite little memo from the Law Society turning the application down. Without legal aid and the 'several hundred pounds' it would cost me to secure a brief I said 'balls to 'em', thaked the solicitor for all his help and wrote off to say that I would be defending myself.

I set to work immediately drafting and redrafting my defence. I kept at it solidly for eighteen hours until I ripped it all up in frustration and went out for a few jars.

I do not like court buildings. Somehow you can never approach them on an equal footing. You always seem to be looking up from down below. Perhaps they are designed that way. I went to Chester Crown Court on my own. Some sort of kamikaze mission to get the whole thing out of my head really. As such I turned up there without any feelings of fear or timidity.

The usher greeted me: "Ah, Mr. Good, you are representing yourself I understand"-he went on about my hearing in court number Two-"starting probably at about eleven... I see your case is only scheduled to last two hours... if you'd like to take a seat in the corridor." He directed me to a line of those ubiquitous tubular chairs where some worried looking skinheads sat looking odd in newly purchased suits.

"Sorry, mate" I said, "I want a room to put my papers together." He began to view me with distaste. "We only have rooms for barristers."

"If my adverseries have got a room then I want one. If I'm not to be granted the same facilities as the barrister I'm up against then I intend kicking up shit in that courtroom." In less time than it takes to occupy a reception kiosk I was given a large conference room on the second floor to myself. I again attempted to organise something on paper but that only lasted a minute. Instead I spent an hour pacing up and down trying to walk off a grade eight hangover.

Number Two court at Chester Crown Court is oak paneled all the way up to a ceiling fifty foot high. I was before a chap called Mr. Slynne, who I note from the judgement papers has the first name of Justice. I open by pleading that the Tribunal totally failed to take into consideration our case that we were taking part in an Industrial Dispute and in their (8 page) judgment had chosen to merely paraphrase management's opening statement.

Well from then on strange things (as they say) began to happen. The words bubbled out from me, reference points sprang to mind from a mass of documents, I brought up questions framed in the most precise legal terms. I really laid it on the line.

Suddenly the Judge took up my points. He threw questions at the barrister representing the North West Regional Health Authority like, "Why can't union members withdraw from agreed procedures as a form of industrial action... What... you mean to tell me is that these union officials were actually attending a meeting with management, who then deemed them to be absent from work." and "So that must mean they were taking part in an industrial dispute."

This was all heady stuff and I could literally feel the posse of Personnel Officers sited behind the barristers squirming in embarrassment. The Judge pursues this line of questioning for half an hour, then stops to confer with his aides.

"We" he announces, "are of the opinion that this has a more complex background than appears on an initial reading." He calls for a two hour adjournment so that the bench can retire to reread the evidence presented. Such action is apparently highly unusual in legal processes. It had my heart racing and sent the Personnel Officers scurrying to the barristers chambers.

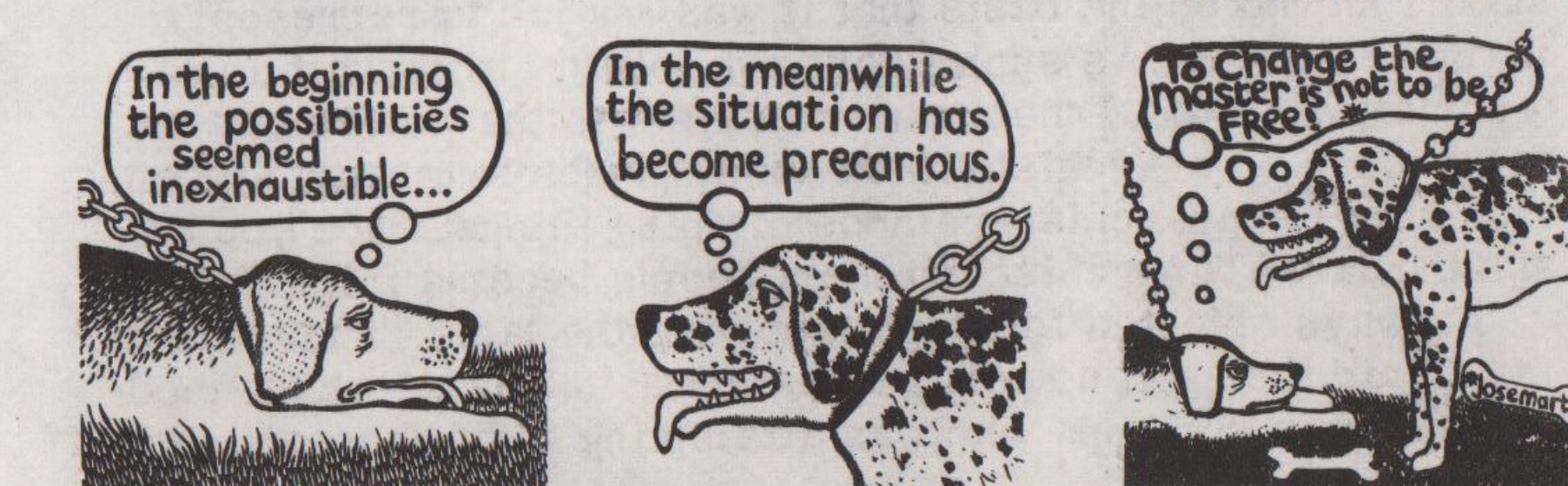
Eventually we were recalled and the judge puts to their barrister that my dismissal stems from something really quite trivial, offers a short speech on the national nursing shortage and ask that I be taken back letting bygones be bygones. "No don't bother asking, I can see by the expressions behind you that that won't be possible". With this Justice Slynne slams his documents together and announces an adjournment for lunch giving management a look, that only judges can, that appears to say they're guilty of kicking his pet cat. As we all stand for them to leave the atmosphere is electric. The posse again scurry into chambers and I feel like finding the nearest grog shop to rehearse a premature celebration.

I did drink that night but for different reasons. The case ploughed on throughout the afternoon getting very bogged down in legal niceties. But if one plays the legal game it has to be played to their rules. In the end the court ruled, amidst much legal verbiage that my application for a reconvened Tribunal was dismissed with the exasperating rider that,

"We have had from Mr Good an admirable and careful presentation of the case, and it may be that before the Industrial Tribunal the matter was not perhaps put as favourably on this particular point or perhaps put as favourably on this particular point or perhaps so precisely as it has been put before us today".

But I did walk from that court with my head in the air. That day saw the end of my adventure in Trade Unionism.

concluded over leaf



Individual linocut copies of these "Blue Dogs" (1, 2, 3) posters are available at 60p a copy from Peter Ford, 13 Cotswold Road, Bedminster, Bristol. If there is any demand UAPS will reproduce some as greetings cards, postcards and gummed labels. 'I am the Printer'.