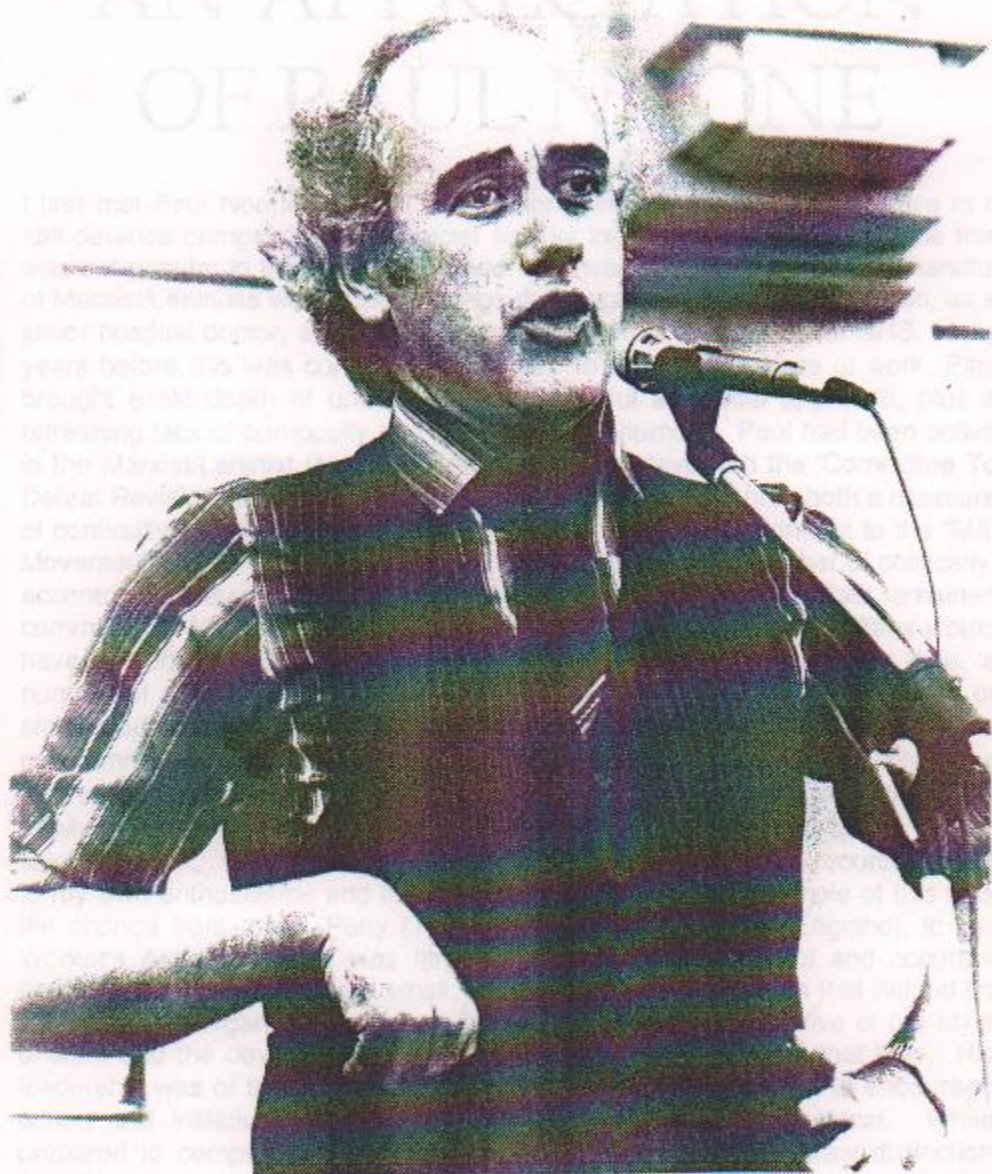


**THE WORKERS ASSOCIATION
REMEMBERS**

PAUL NOONE

1939 - 1989

AN APPRECIATION OF PAULINE



Photograph: Linda Westmore

Pauline addressing a mass rally against the closure of five local Hospitals. Outside Hackney Town Hall September 26th 1983.

AN APPRECIATION OF PAUL NOONE

I first met Paul Noone in 1969; Paul, along with others, was then active in a self-defence campaign against racist attacks in East London. At the time this was not popular in the English Left and Paul was literally one among a handful of Marxist/Leninists who worked alongside Bangladeshi workers. He was, as a junior hospital doctor, also active in organising other doctors in the NHS, many years before this was considered feasible. In both these areas of work, Paul brought great depth of understanding, a careful analytical approach, plus a refreshing lack of pomposity and a dry sense of humour. Paul had been active in the Marxist/Leninist (M/L) Movement since his days with the 'Committee To Defeat Revisionism and For Communist Unity' and represented both a measure of continuity with the anti-revisionist movement and a stark contrast to the "M/L Movement" of the late 60's and early 70's, dominated by a number of politically, eccentric individuals and organisations. As events progressed, Paul remained committed to M/L ideology, even though his obvious talents and abilities would have served him in other, larger, organisations. There were at this time, a number of attempts to unify and develop the movement from the number of small groups that formed it. Paul's response to these was always to look at the programmes they produced, publicity material, reports of work actually done and to balance their analysis of situations with their response in action. He applied the same careful, rigorous analysis in political work as he did in scientific work, which often provided a useful (and educational) counterweight to my own enthusiasms and lack of political analysis. An example of this was the change from a M/L Party (The Working People Party of England), to the Worker's Association. It was largely Paul's extremely painful and accurate analysis of the situation as a small, loosely formed organisation that helped us to develop an organisational forum more accurately representative of our style of work and the development of our own analysis of events at that time. His leadership was of the best kind - constructive in criticism, careful to encourage action and initiative in others, personally modest and untheatrical. While prepared to compromise on many things, he was careful to draw distinction between necessary, tactical compromise and the need to refine and develop an accurate "guide to action" in terms of overall political analysis. A particular example was his appearance as a representative of Junior Hospital Doctors, on a national TV programme on the NHS, which also included the usual Labour and Tory Spokespersons. After the ritualised sparring, there was a bizarrely touching scene when the Labour luminary, (Barbara Castle), smugly chummed up with her Tory opposite number to say that "they" must go back to

Westminster to "work things out". This was all too much for Paul. His angry expostulations were even more effective as he pointed out the connivance of different "Governments" and "Oppositions" in the long term rundown and distortion of the NHS. It is always difficult to assess the political impact of someone who was a close friend, still more difficult to recall years that are not distinguished by our political prominence or our impact on events, but Paul's political influence was greater than might be imagined. He taught, by personal example, the values of careful analysis, a scientific approach to politics. He taught those who worked with him to be open and non-sectarian in their work with others, to be "comradely" in their approach, but to be rigorous and thorough in analysis.

*John O'Dowd,
Belfast.*

August, 1989

THE CANCER PATIENT WAITS FOR HIS BLOOD TEST

*Eleven forty five,
The stars bristle in the frost brittle sky.
And here, in the living room,
Children gone to bed
It is all so clear.
The black woodwork of the record player
Chromium handles gleaming.
The stereophonic sound of Martinu,
Astringent strings tense with the menace
Of a war long since won.
And I am faced with a blood test in the morning.
Will it be an 'all clear', to go on
Planning the future, the children grow up.
Me drawing a pension?
Or will the perspectives narrow down
to a few desperate months.
Never to know who won the cup in 1990?
Never mind chuck, I know who's going to win
In South Africa, the big one.
The biggest victory for us all
Since world war two.
I can afford a smile.*

(February 1987)

A TOUCH OF CLASS ANALYSIS

There can be nothing sadder than ultra-left white collar workers trying shamefacedly to cover up their occupation when in political company. "I may be a clerk (teacher, draughtsman, engineer, doctor) but my dad was a miner and I was born in Barnsley." Here they will emphasise their Northern accents. And reading through the left press one keeps coming across this old thinking of last century - often not explicitly stated, merely assumed. At best white collar workers are tolerated as a necessary (but embarrassing) evil. There's inverted snobbery. The basic notion goes like this; proletariat = working class = manual worker = cloth cap plus back-to-back slum plus outside lavatory. Now if that's true (and all there is to it) what are all the rest? Well presumably either petty bourgeoisie or lumpen proletariat - and they're an expanding group, which contradicts Marx anyway.

To add to the confusion, the categories of thought and analysis of the sociologists, academics and commentators of capitalist society are swallowed whole, mixed in with everyday cliches of thought and subjective attitudes are taken at face value. If you think you're middle class then indeed you are; as the cockney prisoner Fletcher (Ronnie Barker) remarked to the militaristic Scottish prison officer in "Porridge", "I always thought of myself as working class till I went to Glasgow."

It's imperative to get our class analysis sorted out and that's not a question of writing a sociological treatise or a Ph.D. Thesis. It's the straightforward political necessity of finding out who, inside Britain, can be mobilised against capitalism and for socialism (i.e. the rule of the people who work instead of those who own); who can be neutralised; who will fight against this revolution bitterly; and also who do we need when we're building socialism, what sorts of workers are necessary in socialist society - the workers state - albeit with an altered consciousness?

Capitalism with its main aim of profit-making is based on the exploitation of the labour of workers engaged in production. But modern capitalism is highly sophisticated. It's not a simple question of production - there's the related question of research and development, where the creative work of skilled workers is plundered for future profiteering and to improve competitive edge. And there's the essential task of *selling* products (without which profit cannot be realised and without which production serves no purpose under capitalism.) Thus, many workers are engaged in selling commodities and thereby helping the capitalist realise their profits - an essential part of the overheads but exploited labour too.

Then there's the important matter of coordinating complex production, distribution and planning processes for which the capitalist hires (and fires) further skilled workers - in technical, supervisory and administrative jobs. The more developed the capitalist process, the greater the division of labour, the concentration of skill and the longer the training, so the greater the need becomes to integrate the various groups of workers into one continuous process. Advanced capitalism with its greater productivity allows greater profits but it demands greater technical and administrative expertise to be successful.

It also becomes essential to train workers in technically advanced capitalism to a higher level of literacy, numeracy, intellectual skills and scientific understanding. This necessitates more complicated education - a greater time spent in producing skilled workers. It also creates extra material and other demands which increases the chances for commodity production and profit making in new fields.

Having trained more skilled personnel, it becomes necessary to care for their health. It is wasteful and unnecessary to let skilled workers succumb to typhoid or appendicitis or pneumonia. So health care is provided. It's wholly analogous to the maintenance and repair of expensive capitalist machinery (of course workers are seen as machines in capitalist society). Which capitalist would let an expensive machine break down for want of maintenance or a minor repair? Their concern for workers is of a similar nature. Thus health care is provided as cheaply as possible and more workers are employed (and exploited) to provide the health service i.e. maintain and repair the rest of the workforce.

In a complex society like modern capitalism with its highly differentiated workforce, its multiple social interactions and its enormous concentrations of urban people, it becomes necessary to develop careful political and social organisation and manipulation - and so the whole panoply of government (local and central), of social services, of taxation, of policing, of entertaining, of 'keeping them informed' (i.e. indoctrinated via the media and education system) takes shape, involving more workers - not essential to production directly, but essential to keep production and profit making smooth and relatively unchallenged.

In coming issues the WNL will look at some key areas, analysing various workers in education, the social services, the health industry, local government, insurance and banking and the like, to see the class position of the various groups of workers involved, their objective situation and their subjective attitudes; their struggles; their level of class organisation.

Mao's revolutionary development involved much time analysing and working among the peasantry - to the disgust of the "orthodox" and ultra-left revolutionaries of the Chinese Communist Party, who dismissed him as "right-wing" and the peasants as "backward" and "petty bourgeois". The success of the Chinese revolution was based on the successful alliance of the urban working class of China and its ideology, with the peasant masses.

In modern Britain we must analyse and reanalyse the situation of white collar, technical and "professional" workers and forge a successful revolutionary alliance between blue and white collar workers. The growing threat of the openly fascist parties and groups is a timely warning that the battle for the minds and hearts of the white collar worker is on.

Of course such "privileged" groups of workers fight back against falling living standards and this takes several forms, ranging from petty bourgeois responses (e.g. the move by some doctors, especially the medical "establishment", towards private practice and the entrenchment of self-employed status) to a basically proletarian response (organising as trade unionists at the workplace). These are the issues and social movements we will be continuing to examine as one of the central components of our overall class analysis. We welcome discussion and comment.

From: Workers Newsletter, No 1, March 1978.

NEW YORK - 1983

*Josi Marti by Central Park
Arrested on horseback in full heroic flow.
Below an Hispanic drunk
Bottle in brown paper,
Wobbles on the park steps
Serenading the patient horses
Of the buggies
Standing on file
Ears twitching occasionally
Under the old straw hats.
Down in the canyons of Manhattan
The banks, offices and hotels rise sheer
Decorated gothic of last century
Backed by black glass monoliths
Hustling the sky.
The Martini-time backdrop
To bright lights, comic cabbies, alluring girls
And all the fun you've ever been wanting.
Exciting New York, capital of capitalism,
The free for all rhetoric of making good,
Of rising tall above circumstance
Clashing at street level
With the desperate eyes of the unshaven man
Sitting with his child by the church,
The cardboard proclaiming,
'We're hungry. Spare us a dime'.*

*Meanwhile back in the double locked hotel room,
The visiting salesman drinks expensively alone
Watching the porno movie provided,
Discretely added to the bill,
While the junkie's blank glaze
Menaces the wholesome detergent,
Toothpaste and junk food world
Of the cosy advert family.
Symbols of those sincerely unged for
National stereotypes. Our model. Our guide.
A nuclear family untouched by nuclear war,
Unclear morals or the clearly immoral rip off
Of third world families, whose exploitation
Is the real price of trash cans
Full of throwaway proteins and calories,
Attracting bluebottles outside MacDonalds.
New York, New York, it's a hell of a town.*

you've never been had so good

The heroic Labour administration soldiers on, taken shrilly to task by that Don Quixote-in-drag, the ice queen with her blue-rinse politics. Dennis and Jim, that mean machine of Westminster, the bionic duo, staunchly take us along the purgatorial road of self-denial, restraint, hard work and honest-to-goodness poverty. Don't we all feel better for it! Don't we all feel guilty after those delirious, promiscuous, H.P., never-had-it-so-good days of the Beatles, Supermac and the child prodigy Harold Wilson.

The worst-paid workforce in Western Europe, threatened by dole queues, squeezed by taxation, delivered in bondage by our ennobled trade union leadership, we now hear Dennis Healey, eyebrows acquirer on behalf of the government and British capitalism generally, telling us "straight" that the wage freeze stretches into the lost horizon of the future - in 1980 things "might" get back to normal (Why 1980? Scottish oil? A conveniently long way ahead? Superstition?) Meanwhile let profits rip - how else can the tired, old British capitalist, unrefreshed even by those infusions of capital that the Inland Revenue cannot reach, bring himself/herself to invest in British manufacturing industry, while there's still a faster buck to be had in Soweto or Hong Kong? (And let's face it, Shirley, prices must keep on rising).

So while Dennis and Jim and Shirley and Anthony save British capitalism for our children, Michael Foot of blessed memory, thrusting, dynamic, geriatric wonder of the left, marshalls the ranks to bludgeon the policy through parliament. Why no election? So as to secure a working majority? Well it makes it all seem so much more cliff-hanging, critical and vital to do it like this. Keeps the Tribuneites disciplined and gives an illusion of conflict and opposition in the House (and let's face it Maggie, there is no alternative for parliamentary capitalism). And there's always the chance that in another election, Labour will melt away in a resurgence of Celtic nationalism; and Labour's role is too vital at present to run such risks.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the working people of Britain seem spellbound, swallowing the castor oil with scarce a burp of disapproval. The Labour movement and the "official" left seem paralysed. Voices murmur, "It would be worse with a tory government!" It wouldn't be tolerated with a tory government!

If capitalism can only give workers poverty, ignorance, heartache and misery, it's got to go. The system is NOT sacrosanct. But why does nothing happen? Why the revolutionary inertia? Is it because so few really believe that any proposed alternative system could work in Britain? How many of those who

beat their breasts and loudly proclaim, "I am a communist, socialist, revolutionary, Maoist, Trotskyist, Marxist etc., etc." are really sure that socialism (however they define it) could be or ought to be practised in Britain in their own lifetimes. Isn't it probable that they and the mass of working people fear that attempts to overthrow capitalism will only lead to a worse economic and social system - with greater poverty, heartache and misery but this time accompanied by violence, bloodshed, disruption and failure. No left group, ourselves included, have been able to present a credible alternative programme, something worldly-wise grown-ups can believe as remotely possible, to replace capitalism. This is an urgent task.

1. It involves understanding what socialism means in terms of workers democracy and a realistic economic system geared to secure increasingly, the needs of working people, rather than the production of commodities. But this has to be posed in sufficient detail to take account of the unique features of the British Isles in terms of human and material resources as well as our historical legacy.

2. It means identifying those sections of the people whose interests will be served by a socialist society and who can be mobilised to achieve it.

3. It involves finding out who will oppose socialism implacably and also those sections who while not favouring it can nevertheless be persuaded not to oppose it.

This means undertaking a comprehensive class analysis concentrating on the realities of the 1970's rather than the tired, academic quizzes or conventional attitudes of yesteryear.

4. It necessitates an objective and unromantic examination of the development of the British state and its national composition and how best to channel the forces of national independence to further the break up of capitalism and the liberation of all the working people.

5. It demands an unbiased and hard scrutiny of our methods and organisation which have been either sloppy and liberal or fervently isolationist for far too long. While we all fart about playing charades with our favourite storytime hero of the left, wondering why the workers (whoever they may be) fail to see the light, the forces of reaction are massing in case Labour fails to deliver.

At last the Trot slogans of a decade ago are right, "British capitalism is in deep crisis!" If we fumble it this time, we won't be around to see the action replay, much less play extra time. Capitalists play for keeps. So must we.

From: Workers Newsletter, No 8, August 1976.

CALDERDALE

Hills like slagheaps limed with snow
The empty mills in the valley bottom
Staring blank faced
Windowpanes broken
Like missing teeth.
The meeting hall half filled and cold
Only the rhetoric fiery
Here, the industrial revolution was born,
But now, all used up,
The town is thrown aside
Unemployment, old age, neglect
Halifax has become expendable.
A people, a civilising
Working class culture
Is threatened.
The no-nonsense friendliness and caring
Which made a community
From this huddle of houses
Cut into the moor means
Nothing in South West One
But it's an age old story
And they fight back.

(February 1983)

Positive Role

To develop any political campaign, concrete practice in a specific situation is more useful than volumes of theoretical exhortation. Moreover we should start our struggles where we have our cadres and contacts - not try to take over other peoples' struggles which are further developed. Of course we must try to support all specific class struggles as practically and usefully as possible and develop contacts on a basis of mutual respect and help with those involved in struggle. But giving big-mouthed advice from the side-lines in leaflets and public meetings, which attempt to take over leadership of the struggle only alienates those involved in it. We have few cadres and we must use them effectively. We must not rush like bees from flower to flower sipping the nectar of other people's struggles. We must redouble our efforts at our own workplaces and in our own environments, making a detailed analysis of conditions, class contradictions and recognising those specific issues which may be developed in struggle to involve as many working people as possible. We must form working alliances in these struggles with all militants and not seek office necessarily in such movements. Personal involvement and contacts can be sufficient providing political analysis and ideas are clear and properly put over. And we must always advance in a relevant way our general political analysis and the need for working class power, never allowing misguided trust by the people, including militants, in the legislative processes and institutions of capitalism.

A properly developed struggle in a specific situation can become pacemaker for the whole country and give a political lead to our whole class. The Party in its practical work must set an example for the class to follow. Successful local struggles spark off general revolutionary developments. At the same time party organisation must be kept simple and committees only formed and meetings held to serve practical purposes. We must also collectively delegate tasks to cadres to carry out and not try to do every job by committee. Allow cadres to act responsibly, this is the only way we develop as cadres. Mistakes will be made. This is not disastrous if we honestly admit them and rectify them. If we are afraid to act for fear of making mistakes or prevent any cadre taking initiatives for the same reason, then we will never grow.

From: "The Way Forward" A Marxist-Leninist analysis of the British State, the CPGB and the tasks for revolutionaries.

THE NEED FOR A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PAPER

At the present time the right wing ideology of Mrs Thatcher and the tory right wing seems rampant. It is true that British capitalism is experiencing difficulties during the world slump with increased competition in contracting markets from capitalist competitors. That may explain the attack on living standards, jobs, trades union and civil rights we have experienced in the past five years and more but it fails to explain the degree of ideological support the government enjoys from ordinary working people. Mrs Thatcher has attacked the Liberal, Social Democratic consensus politics of the fifties, sixties and early seventies - full employment, civil rights, for all, concern (at least verbal) for the poor of the third world, approval of the welfare state, the notion of equal opportunities for all, the right to strike and so on. We have instead a strident attack on "spongers" the exhortation to "get on your bike" as you are not owed a living; the catch-call that you should "look after yourself" chauvinism; racism; anti-unionism; privilege approved of and authoritarian attitudes encouraged - "us and them" and "they" have to be kept in their place which in turn means more "law and order".

Yet ordinary people seem apathetic, feel powerless or even subscribe to at least part of the Thatcher ideology. Labour has failed to rally massive opposition to a government pursuing economic policies considered unnecessarily harsh and damaging by the great majority of capitalist commentators and economists. The government has made political mistakes but the opposition still falters. There is no faith in *Labourism*. Experience of the Wilson and Callaghan governments and local Labour town-hall administration has been negative. Indeed the anti-democratic, bureaucratic, hypocritical inefficiency of it all seems to underline what Mrs Thatcher says. "Socialism" is an inefficient bureaucracy, giving jobs and privileges to the boys, but

squandering the peoples' money and insensitive and authoritarian about their needs.

Meanwhile the Marxist or revolutionary left has utterly failed to develop a coherent critical line to Labourism or to the tory right which poses any credible alternative of socialism worth struggling for. Instead they have played juvenile, sectarian games where hack slogans and stereotyped arguments have replaced any active thinking or learning. It is not sufficient to say the workers need to smash capitalism and replace it with socialism - how is that to happen? What is this socialism - not in vague term but in terms of real, everyday life at work, at home, in overall social terms, in health, education, leisure, personal relationships and so on? How will we organise to smash capitalism - how will we mobilise ordinary people? How will democracy be ensured? There is no reassurance looking at the sectarian left - their incantations, intolerance and self-aggrandizement.

There are many active socialists in the broad labour movement, many making do with the Labour party or some other left party or in the unions or active on other issues - anti-racism, for peace, women's liberation, tenants movements, solidarity with overseas anti-imperialist struggles and etc. They realise that socialism, i.e. workers power, is the only kind of society which gives us a chance to solve our political, economic and social problems, they know that the prospects for socialism in Britain are bleak at present but they must struggle, campaign and mobilise, against capitalist society - its ideas, values and practice.

The big *political* question is how we organise as activists and how we work as a revolutionary force, so that we mobilise the masses of working people to achieve socialism.

The first essential is to make contact with class conscious activists throughout the country so that we can share ideas and experiences and so develop an effective political analysis and programme. It means finding out about British society in all its complexity - the whole panoply of oppression and exploitation; the clearer and more complete our collective understanding, the surer our grasp of how to destroy it. We also need to be revolutionary in our conceptual approach to socialism. A fundamental questioning of values and attitudes is called for. Thus socialist education is not "more comprehensive schools" for children and young people - it means seriously thinking about what education is for, what schools should be and do in the community, questioning the sharp division of labour between teachers and pupils and other workers and members of society. Socialist health is not simply "more high tech. hospitals", it necessitates questioning the basic concepts of health, health education, the rights of patients, the role of health professionals - and not in some trendy, petty bourgeois "homoeopathy and Illich" approach but in a serious, (socialist)

scientific way. The *revolution* will start in the ideology we develop and popularise.

To start this process we need a regular, if modest, socialist paper which prints articles exploring these themes - reflecting all aspects of capitalist society - how it works, how we struggle (well or badly), how we question its basic ideas, how we expose those "critics" of capitalism who merely seek to pretty its ugly face with cosmetic legislation but leave it basically untouched and fundamentally unquestioned.

The paper must only publish articles which express real thought and genuine experience. Hack phrase-mongering to produce an "instant" attitude on some topical issue at home or abroad is to be strongly discouraged. Such predictable, cliché-ridden articles are counterproductive. The dispensing of hero-worship, which takes the form of following the line of "our dear saviour" (whoever he/she might be this year) is also inappropriate. In the context of international movements and the Marxist parties and groups in other countries, we would do well to find out more, think more, discuss more, and print less. We need recognition from our own class not from some party in another country. We must also be self-sufficient, especially financially.

A paper which encourages revolutionary socialist thought and which is readable is our major need. It could become the means of contacting activists and then organising in the revolutionary, democratic body or party which is so badly need by our class today.

From: Workers Newsletter, September 1984.

WORKERS RULE - OK!

Over the past four weeks and more, our crusading British press have lain bare (and not only on page 3) another ghastly, shock-horror scandal that had you rooted in your cornflakes. Once again they would have us believe that the Asiatic hordes are flooding into 3-star, home counties hotels at ratepayers' expense, en route from Malawi to the Leicester Labour Exchange, equipped with forged passports, several wives, grandmas, nephews and a Claimants' Union Guide to Social Security Benefits, pressed tightly against their swollen money belts. Once the Empire was ours! Now it's been turned into the Bangla cinema and curry take-away.

Our Fleet Street boys on the job, tearing themselves away from the rigours of El Vino gossip and backbiting, have not been unaided in their tiresome quest for the far-fetched and fabulous. Up from the darkest depths of Ulster, where you need never fear the violence of the Pakistani ghetto, comes Enoch, the best prime minister we never had, to fling his filth in all directions, hoping some will stick. When he speaks, his lips move; but the content of what he says makes you wonder if it is being emitted from another orifice. He is no longer alone or rejected in his aim. No longer is he berated as an extremist, to be lumped together with the National aFront; but is fondly chided as being just a little more "emotional" than the rest of us.

And what of the Great White Hope of the Labour Movement, Jim'll-Fix-It Callaghan? How does he stand on this issue of internationalism; of honouring solemn, governmental promises? Wasn't he Home Secretary when the British passport was devalued for British citizens in East Africa - providing they had pigmented skins? Good practice for when he devalued the pound as Chancellor of the Exchequer (in spite of solemn promises etc etc). Now he is devaluing the name of the Labour movement in his complete failure even to state the truth about the situation.

One of his first acts as Premier was to boot Alex Lyons out of the Home Office because of his alleged liberal attitudes to the admission of dependants of British citizens from East Africa or elsewhere who had "immigrated" here (pigmented skin variety of course!). Many of these citizens are not only British but political refugees too. How despicable imperialism is, even to its own NCO class! We say Lyons had "alleged" liberal tendencies, because there is no earthly reason for imagining that he in fact was liberal.

The rules for admission could have been drawn up by the scriptwriters for "Mission Impossible" and initialled by Dr. Goebbels.

But why was all this spadework thrown up by the media and politicians? What was its purpose? Who is it meant to incite? Is it chance that it coincided with the fall of the pound - "floating" like a stone; and with the crucial pay freeze manipulations?

The Roman emperors, when threatened by plebeian unrest, threw a few more Christians to the lions. Our current imperialist Labour office-boys, fearing a showdown with the rank and file of the Labour movement, are aiding in the production of a side show that promises to make Saturday Night at the Coliseum seem like another unrehearsed episode of "Crossroads". The Great Race Spectacular is meant to divide, divert and demoralise working people.

Invocations to "love one another" or appeals for the "impartial majesty of the law" to operate (aren't the Southall police still saying it's not racial?) or cries for "more jobs and better education for the young" might go down well with the councillors, the M.P.'s, the prospective parliamentary candidates, the townswomens' guilds and the leader writers, all of whom inhabit this twilight zone of cliché and rhetoric. The hard fact is that there is no solution to racialism, sectarianism and its unprovoked violence this side of the revolution. Capitalist politicians will continue to tread their starry paths to fame and fortune over the broken minds and bodies of those they mislead. Societies based on and worshipping individualism, greed and selfishness must of their very nature intensify and perpetuate contradictions, antagonisms and conflict among the people. Socialist society is based on serving our fellow workers to the utmost of our ability and striving for the unity of all working people of both sexes, all races, ages, nationalities and cultures on the basis of equality, mutual respect and understanding. Working people working together.

In the medium run this is our only solution. But in the short run (i.e. right now, today what do we do to minimise the suffering of the oppressed and help bring forward the revolutionary change we need and expect?

In 1969-1970 WPPE took a leading role in helping East Bengalis (Pakistanis then) defend themselves against racist attacks in the Euston and East London areas. The policy was one of political mobilisation of the people under attack with all possible support from working people of all races. Self-defence patrols were formed when the police were judged to have "failed in their duty" and when petitions to M.P.'s, councillors etc had evoked no practical response. A citizens' arrest was made of an attacker (the police prosecution failed to produce a conviction) and a major racist attack frustrated. The authorities began to take "urgent action" with a mass influx of police etc. The issue eventually became "national" and "international", the Pakistani government

making representations to the Home Office. Arrests of Bengalis were made on affray charges but a successful political legal defence was made.

The main change was the altered consciousness of the Bengalis (and those who had helped them) who became determined to defend themselves and their basic right to be free from unprovoked assault and molestation.

Recent demonstrations in West and East London almost entirely organised by the Asian community have shown that these lessons have not been forgotten. The passive submission of a decade ago has now evaporated. Not only is there a move to self-defence on the streets but in the past few years a determination has grown among self-organised Asian workers to win a better deal in the sweat shops and factories throughout the country - a campaign which has strengthened the cause of all workers.

Undetected by the liberal British ("We want a riot!") press, more than 8,000 working people, representing all communities, the trade unions, left groups and all religions, marched through Southall peacefully demonstrating their solidarity. (That's no story! No blood in the gutters!)

What happened in Southall can be repeated everywhere. There is no reason why white workers cannot be mobilised on this issue. The fascists must not be allowed to dictate the propaganda or the terms of the propaganda. If we find ourselves arguing the liberal defence over racist statistics about just how many Asians are coming here or whether they have un-hygienic habits or make good parents or whether or not we like sarees, then we are failing. Nor must we punch every worker in the eye or scream "nazi!" at them if they come out with a typical racist cliché which is current political propaganda. Nor do we ignore the racist remarks or excuse them in "otherwise class-conscious" workers. It is a continuing process of patient, painstaking education. We must continually make clear that the sufferings of workers under capitalism are an intrinsic part of capitalism itself and nothing to do with the presence or absence of workers born in a different land. We must also make clear the imperialist history and continuing imperialist role of British capitalism.

If we close our eyes we can kid ourselves that because our dole queues are British, our queen is British, our weights and measures, tea, breakfast, road signs and football are British, that we live a full and noble existence, blessed by a British god in a heaven looking like a margarine advert. But taking a good hard look at reality we discover that colour and race do not matter to capitalism unless it means either easier to exploit or easier to con. Black and super-exploited; or white and exploited *and* brainwashed. Once we can see that and unite, we are irresistible. Divided, we don't stand a chance.

From: Workers Newsletter, No 6, June 1976.

Doctors seek inquiry on NHS 'scandal'

The Government has been asked to hold an independent public inquiry into the activities of "unscrupulous" consultants at several hospitals who abuse the National Health Service facilities for private gain at the taxpayers' expense.

In an open letter to Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary for Social Services, the Junior Hospital Doctor's section of the Medical Practitioners' Union says that wholesale abuse of the National Health Service, its staff, services, and facilities by "certain consultants" for private medical care is a "national scandal".

The JHDS is getting together a list of NHS staff in all parts of the service who, it says, will be prepared to quote names and facts to members of an independent inquiry. It has demanded that the evidence given should be in confidence "to protect health service workers from possible victimisation".

The Department of Health and Social Security said last night that it could not confirm that the letter had been received by Sir Keith but that if it did arrive it would be considered and answered in due course.

The letter mentions use of NHS theatres, theatre time, medical, nursing, and technical staff to perform private operations; the use of laboratory, X-ray, and other diagnostic services for private patients without paying for them; the use of NHS clinics, clinic time and staff to see private patients for which no payment is made to the staff or hospital for the facilities.

"So busily do many consultants pursue their private practices that they neglect their national health duties. In several major London hospitals there are some consultants who rarely do the work they are paid for. Increasingly, the National Health Service is becoming a registrar-run service. Registrars find themselves deputising for consultants who are too busy with private practices to do their ward rounds, teaching or NHS operations.

"Certainly, many consultants do give

a dedicated and conscientious service to their patients; some actively eschew private practice. But those who want to practise privately should do so at private nursing homes using private diagnostic services". the letter concludes.

The letter, which is signed by Paul Noone, chairman of the JHDS/MPU, last night said that if there was no satisfactory reply from Sir Keith the JHDS was planning to conduct its own "mini-survey" to quantify the abuses. "We realise that many people will think that those responsible for the abuses are a very small minority. This is what we will examine". He said the people prepared to give evidence were not only doctors.

Dr Derek Stevenson, secretary of the British Medical Association, said last night that he had not seen the letter and he would want to see its text before making specific comment. He would also want to have evidence of the foundation of the statements.

*Guardian: Thursday, January 12th,
1971*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO AGM OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION 1988.

Since the last AGM, the NHS seems to have reeled from one crisis to the next. Chronic underfunding, cuts in services, failure to develop new and necessary services, the implementation of "Achieving A Balance" with its profound implications for the careers and modes of work of hospital doctors, the spiralling costs of medical insurance, and the problems of recruiting nurses, laboratory scientists, operating department assistants, secretaries and so on - because of continuing low pay. And all this in a period of an apparent economic boom. It seems amazing in the circumstances that morale in the NHS has remained so buoyant. Patients are being treated in greater numbers than ever before but the service continues to be decent, kind and considerate in the overwhelming number of cases.

Could it be that despite the anxieties about the government's persistent hostility to the idea of the NHS as a public service, the feeling is beginning to grow that the NHS will indeed survive Mrs Thatcher and her schemes of private health insurance, personal provision and "market place" economics?

On every other front she has carried all before her, the Falklands, Cruise missiles, the Miners' Strike, Trade Union reforms, privatisation of public services. S. African sanctions (or at least the lack of them), bombing Libya, selling off Westlands, Poll tax, high unemployment, personal tax cuts and so on and on. But over the NHS, Mrs Thatcher has not only met resistance but has actually been repeatedly frustrated in the carrying out of her plans.

At the end of 1987 she lost the great funding debate. The government shrilly claimed to be spending more than ever before on the health service. The claims were totally discredited and chiefly because the medical profession spoke up. Eminent heart surgeons, presidents of Royal Colleges, the BMA, groups of consultants making collective public statements nationally and locally in London, Birmingham, Berkshire, Scotland, indeed virtually the entire country. The same warnings of underfunding, the same warm support of the NHS in principle as a means of providing health care. Perhaps the turning point in the debate was the massive doctors' petition, initiated by Hospital Alert, and presented to Downing Street as the number one national news story, with senior doctors demanding adequate funding urgently. The NHSCA played an important role in helping make that petition a thumping success. Our ability to

amass hundreds of consultant signatures from all over the country from our members and their contacts at short notice was critical. Of the deputation to Downing Street, all but one of the consultants was an NHSCA member. (Indeed, the exception was a recent convert from the Conservative Party itself).

The immediate upshot was a cash injection into the NHS but the government had lost the debate on funding. As a nation we were not spending enough on health care although we are getting excellent value for money from the minimal amounts that were spent. So the government and its ideologues began to switch their attack. Of course more money was needed but where from? The NHS was a bottomless pit for the public purse. What was needed was to mobilise private monies and the efficiency of the commercial sector and to bring consumerist values into play. The right wing think tanks began to churn out pamphlets every week promoting the wonders of the market and the intrinsic evils of the NHS. And then came the announcement of a quickie review of health service funding. A secretive all-cabinet affair with the results already agreed in principle before any evidence was taken, Mrs Thatcher was determined to deliver the coup de grace. But she had not reckoned with the nurses and a further reverse. The nurses pay dispute succeeded where miners, printers, teachers, doctors, and others had fought long, hard and bloodily for little if any return. Of course popular support was overwhelming but the nurses too showed a militancy and solidarity that was new and impressive. Though there is evidence that, true to form, the government is even now trying to find ways of renegeing on its promises of full funding of the nurses' award and is seeking ways of trying to divide nurses amongst themselves.

In the meantime, the cabinet review of health service funding has run into its own problems. A sustained flow of meetings, articles, TV and radio programmes have exposed the fallacies of the commercial medicine lobby and encouraged feelings of keeping things as they are rather than take risks with right wing extremists. The NHSCA has played a full part here too by providing advice, speakers, criticism and the ideas for various programme makers, writers and politicians.

One of the more outstanding of the programmes made to expose the dangers of commercial medicine was Channel 4's "Kentucky Fried Medicine" which took apart the claims of the 4 major US for profit hospital chains, now infiltrating the UK and showed the deleterious effects of their philosophy and operations on public health.

In recent weeks the cabinet review appears to have been backtracking rapidly from more extreme positions. There will be no full frontal attack on the NHS and its mode of funding. There may be more tax concessions for private insurance, an internal market which will weaken the universal and equitable provision of health care to all but no major funding change. The removal of

John Moore as NHS supremo is a clear indication of disillusionment and retreat. Rumours are rife that Clark has been chosen to "get tough" with consultants - principal aim being to remove any remaining privileges that allow us to speak out securely on government policy and the health of the nation. The doctor's opposition must be squashed if this government is ultimately going to achieve its aims over the NHS

This is why the NHSCA remains more significant than ever. We are a pro-NHS lobby of consultants - not a trades union. By all means let BMA and MPU and whoever speak up for the NHS but they remain trades unions looking (quite correctly) after their members economic interest. The NHSCA is simply pro-NHS and we only speak on trades union issues in so far as they affect the NHS. There is room for both sorts of organisation. It means we can take a much clearer stand on such issues as private practice and commercial medicine. Mrs Thatcher is blocked by the undoubted fact that the great majority of hospital doctors, including consultants, do believe in the basic principles of the NHS and that the British people need an equitable universally available health service.

Where she will seek to attack consultants is over the undoubted fact that a minority are heavily caught up in private practice and are neglecting their NHS commitment. Indeed, a few are bending rules and are getting away, at the moment, with abuse of their position. To combat the few, she may well seek to introduce rules and powers that in effect harness the profession as a whole and indeed severely limit our freedom to speak out.

As consultants we should be speaking out against abuse where it occurs in colleagues and supporting all those who work hard and long for the NHS. We should also be active in the management process making sure that whatever resources are available are used efficiently and that we are fully informed about what is going on in our own health districts.

The battle for the NHS will continue and with ongoing popular support, in part generated by our own activities, we can still prevail against the government. What we badly need is the ability to put our case regularly and clearly (in the first instance to our own consultant colleagues to maintain morale and keep them well informed). This is why we need to sustain "The Specialist" for at least a year, until advertising can be guaranteed to run it permanently. I appeal to members to sign the bankers order for one year. A mere £60, much less than Lawson's tax gift (which you no doubt deprecated and would have preferred to see invested in the NHS!). But most of all I ask you to use "The Specialist". Write for it. Give it to interested colleagues. Help NHSCA grow even more this year. A further 25 per cent increase in membership would be most welcome. The NHS needs all the consultant support it can get.

Healing The Cuts: A Socialist Health Policy

Over the past few months a consensus has grown amongst health service professionals, managers and authority members that the government has in effect underfunded the NHS over seven or more years.

The BMA, the presidents of the Royal Colleges, leading cardiac surgeons, ad hoc groups of consultants in London, Birmingham, Berkshire, Essex and elsewhere, the Royal College of Nursing, the National Association of Health Authorities and more recently the Tory dominated Social Services

Committee of the House of Commons unanimously making much the same points and demands have all joined the health service unions in decrying the rundown of the service and demanding an extra one and a half to two billion pounds to restore the spending position to adequacy; the increase being an

estimated extra half a per cent of GDP, which would still leave Britain as one of the lowest spenders on health care in Western Europe.

Opinion polls show overwhelming support for increased NHS expenditure taking precedence over tax cuts. Health Minister Moore talks of not writing 'blank cheques' for 'infinite' and 'arbitrary' demands.

The 'new' right is seizing the chance to argue that the NHS has failed - a typical socialist dinosaur, inefficient, bureaucratic, ossified. As a result we need the fresh air of market economics blowing through health care, generating extra funding from private sources, to the point where Edwina Currie brashly suggests we should all give up our second holidays or decorating the bedroom to pay our medical way.

Having engineered the crisis in the NHS, Mrs Thatcher has now put herself in charge of finding 'solutions' with a quickie policy review where the answers are known before evidence is taken. All kinds of fantastic and radical ideas are floated, presumably with the aim of making us feel relieved when at last they simply continue the present policies of handouts to the private sector, tax concessions on health insurance, cuts in NHS budgets and privatisation of more segments of the NHS including pathology services.

One problem for Thatcher has been the way private insurance has only 'penetrated' ten per cent of the

population (and fifty per cent of that as company perks). Gloom and doom in the NHS could help increase the uptake. However insurance companies are concerned with commercial priorities, not health care. Hence those most in need, semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed workers and their families and the elderly, chronically sick and pregnant of all classes, will find difficulty in getting insurance at affordable prices. Indeed under a private insurance system, compulsory or otherwise, we could all end up spending a great deal more for a great deal less in terms of care.

The NHS has the lowest bureaucratic overheads of any health care structure in the world (albeit that there is still room for improvement). France and West Germany for example spend twice as much on bureaucracy and the USA almost four times more. Moreover if you pay doctors by items of service, they will oblige by performing those items of service with the best remuneration, be it surgery, injections, blood tests or X-rays and consequently shift the whole system towards the curative (or at least rewardable) intervention, the duplication of acute services, the neglect of cinderella services (geriatrics, mental illness, preventive medicine), the excessive provision of expensive equipment, 'high-tech' centres and the use of expensive drugs. West Germany is a glaring example. Market forces will attract doctors and other health care workers to the acute specialities in

the affluent metropolitan centres and the periphery becomes a medical desert.

The NHS was only established after a vigorous campaign by the labour movement (the miners' union to the fore). Its massive popularity as the cornerstone of the welfare state has been unchallenged for forty years. It has many warts, in particular as the Black Report of 1979 showed, the way it has consistently delivered more succour to the professional, managerial and white collar classes than to manual worker classes. Nevertheless it is perceived by many as a 'socialist' institution. There is general approval of its philosophical basis in the provision of free care to those in need, financed collectively from taxation, with any rationing based on medical factors and not the ability to pay.

It is indeed for this very reason that the new right wants to 'smash the NHS', reminiscent of Hitler's obsession with destroying Leningrad and Stalingrad. For Mrs Thatcher it would represent the climax of her successful career. The prime minister who buried socialism. It is the toughest task she's faced yet and there is no doubt she can be beaten.

Health service staff - nurses, MLSOs, ancillary workers, doctors - have already taken a lead in the fightback but the labour movement as a whole needs to concentrate on this issue, locally as well as nationally. We cannot leave it to party leaders and temporary allies - top doctors, drug company directors,

backbench Tories - to lead the campaign and determine its content and direction. Nor should we merely get hung up on issues of funding.

Even with 'adequate' funding the NHS has major problems from a socialist perspective. It has to improve health care delivery to those most in need, working class families and old people. It needs to promote good health and not simply deal with sickness. This means developing policies which will have a major impact on energy, transport, housing, the provision of 'family allowance' (or wages for mothers) and other social benefits, agricultural policy and of course the food, tobacco and alcohol industries. It means eradicating racist and sexist discrimination in employment practice and the provision of services. And so as to begin to tackle these issues, it means above all else creating democratic control of policy. The way of ensuring such democracy needs discussion and perhaps experiment. Socialists must stand for ordinary people having real control over their lives and not simply compete with Thatcher to offer what is for most an illusory 'consumer choice'.

The survival and development of the NHS should become the key issue facing socialists and our best starting point for regenerating our ideology in a popular and positive form so as to stem and reverse the spread of 'Thatcherite' ideas.

From: Interlink, April 1988.

Doctor predicts death of NHS

A second Thatcher Government would bring about the end of the National Health Service, according to Royal Free Hospital consultant Dr Paul Noone.

Dr Noone, who chairs the NHS Consultants' Association, predicted that if the Tories were returned to power, major medical specialities - such as renal dialysis - would be put out to private contract.

"We would see increasingly a blurring of the distinction in the NHS between what is private and what is public. Eventually the public sector would be starved of money", said Dr Noone, who is a consultant in microbiology at the Royal Free, Hampstead.

Pressing home his point, the association - formed seven years ago largely at the invitation of Royal Free doctors - has now produced a "warning report" which outlines the case for much heavier investment in

the health service - and spells out the risk if that path were not followed.

A total 15,000 copies have been printed and sent to every hospital in the country, every community health council, various political groups and to every doctor in the Oxford region - one of the areas worst hit by cuts in health budgets.

The report was in the pipeline long before the general election date was announced, but - according to Dr Noone - "when Mrs Thatcher decided to cut and run we thought we had better get a move on".

The association maintains that despite claims of increases in real terms in NHS funding, the health service has run into increasing difficulties, with wards closed, services reduced and new buildings unused for lack of staff.

The health service needs an increase in funding every year just to provide the same level of care, according to the report. But the underlying problem is that Britain spends a significantly smaller proportion of its national resources on health than almost any other comparable country.

In the Hampstead district - which faces a cut of nearly £2 million by 1986 - there would have to be "a very major cut in services", or people going out into Hampstead High Street with collecting boxes, Dr Noone said.

*Hampstead & Highgate Express:
27th May 1983*

