

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

INSIDE

Solidarnosc

Solidarnosc interview centre pages

ALL OUT FOR



THE HEALTH WORKERS!

The health workers' campaign to save the NHS is gaining momentum.

Last Wednesday, 3rd, over 6,000 health workers struck in London to protest at the terrible pay and conditions and the gross underfun-

ding of the Health Service.

Similar action also took place in the West and East Midlands, West and South Yorkshire and parts of Scotland.

Yorkshire miners from Frickley colliery also

went on strike for the day after refusing to cross nurses' picket lines.

On 19 February, health workers in Manchester are set to take action.

Turn to page 3

PRESSES GANG

Stigma at the Telegraph

By Jim Denham

"One aim is to reduce the stigma. Sufferers are still losing their jobs because employers do not understand the illness."

That was the Daily Telegraph of January 19 noting the fact 1988 is Epilepsy Year.

Ian Corner can vouch for the truth of what the Telegraph said. He was sacked on January 27 for no other reason than being an epileptic. He completed his 3 month probationary period with the employer and the General Manager, Mr Angus Clark, described him as "without fault, but too much of a liability". Ian had told his employers about being an epileptic when he was first interviewed and no one had seemed to mind. He had just one black-out at work in 3 months and that was only for 10 minutes.

Ian's union called a meeting to support him but the company threatened anyone attending it with the sack so that the turnout wasn't all that it might have been. Nevertheless Ian's workmates and his union intended to continue to fight for his reinstatement. Who was this Dickensian employer? Why, none other than the Daily Telegraph.

You can support Ian Corner's campaign to get his job back by contacting Louisa Bull (SOGAT Clerical MOC) on 01-538 7903.

A load of pills

The collapse last week of the Slim Liner company and the Fraud Squad's continuing investigations into the activities of its boss Kit Miller, could prove to be very embarrassing for the News of the World.

Last summer the NotW published what amounted to a free plug for Miller's Slim Liner no-diet pill. As a result about 20,000 NotW readers forked out £9.95 for courses of the 'wonder' pill. The police became involved after a flood of complaints from people who either didn't receive the pills they had paid for or found them to be completely useless.

How did a national Sunday newspaper come to give prominence to a dud product promoted by such an obvious con-man as Miller? The explanation seems to be a fatal combination of ambition and gullibility on the part of the NotW editor Wendy Henry.

Miller approached her with an 'exclusive' story about his ex-girlfriend Samantha Fox being pregnant. In exchange for this 'scoop' Ms Henry agreed to publish an enthusiastic article about Slim Liner. As it turns out, the Samantha Fox story turned out to be as dud as Miller's pills.

Given the fact that Wendy Henry made her name by fabricating an 'interview' with Falklands war widow Marica McKay it may seem strange that she was so easily fooled by Miller. It seems that you can cheat a cheater...

**NO
TURNING
BACK!**

Women and the struggle for socialism

60p plus postage from PO Box 823 London SE15

Palestinians demand independence

By Clive Bradley

The old days can never return. After Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinian protestors, after the killings and the beatings, and after the clear refusal of the Palestinians to abandon their struggle nothing can ever be the same again.

In the occupied territories, a new underground leadership has been organised — the Unified National Command, grouping together PLO factions Fatah, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front and the Palestinian Communist Party, and the Islamic Jihad.

Five leaflets making calls for action have been produced by this body, which has clear authority among Palestinians. When a 3-day all-out strike was called, Jerusalem merchants closed their shops for 21 days, and the Command had to issue a further leaflet calling for 2-3 hours a day trading as many Palestinians were buying goods from markets in (largely Jewish) West Jerusalem.

In mid-January, leaflets called for boycotts of Israeli products for which there were Palestinian alternatives, and a boycott of VAT payments, as well as of the pro-Jordanian paper 'al-Nahar'.

Unlike earlier Palestinian leaderships in the territories, the command has stayed underground, emphasising that any negotiations by the Israeli government must be with the PLO as a body rather than local leaderships. The autonomy of the



command from the exiled PLO does seem to be considerable, however.

Within it there must be tensions: in addition to the CP, the Popular and Democratic Fronts both see themselves as Marxist, and Fatah is a secular nationalist movement, while Jihad is part of the 'new wave' of fundamentalism.

Political action does not only take the form of stone-throwing. For the last decade, trade union, student, women's and youth

organisations have grown in the occupied territories. In response to the Israeli 'defence force's' efforts to starve out refugee camps, unified local support committees were formed — first to provide food for the camps, and later when curfews were lifted, for the especially needy.

Some commentators have argued that the Israeli crackdown that sparked the current uprising was an effort to destroy grassroots organisations that had developed.

Inside Israel, the divisions are widening. Despite the much reported drift to the right, opposition to Israeli policy is growing. Peace Now has revived — independently of the Labour Party which always controlled it in the past. Thousands demonstrated in Tel-Aviv in December. On 23 January, 80-100,000 marched through Tel-Aviv, addressed by speakers calling for negotiations with Jordan and the PLO.

Indeed, Labour could be in trouble electorally. As its leadership runs ever rightwards (Rabin) or vacillates pathetically (Peres), the Arabs — whose votes they need to compete in the polls with the right

wing Likud rivals — are deserting them.

Meanwhile Likud is galloping to the right. The policy of 'transferring' the Arabs out of Israel and the occupied territories, formerly confined to fascist groups, is now supported by such prominent figures as the deputy defence minister. Likud's former defence minister Ariel Sharon (who has recently bought a house in Arab East Jerusalem in a widely publicised and deeply provocative move) has a programme that includes the removal of the franchise from Israel's Arabs, the conquest of Jordan, and the killing of Yasser Arafat.

Despite the Rabins and Sharons of this world, the uprising continues. The Palestinians' demand is for nothing less than their own sovereign state.

Clause 28

The News of the World, that thoughtful mouthpiece of freedom-loving Englishmen, had an editorial last Sunday calling for the editor of the London freesheet Capital Gay to "burn in hell". It was the high-point so far in what seems to be a growing campaign in the popular tabloids of abuse against lesbians and gay men.

'Homosexual acts' between men are legal — provided the men are over 21 and it is in private, and provided the men are not in the armed forces or Northern Ireland. But employers can sack homosexual men and women purely for their sexuality — without redress.

And there is no law to stop gutter sleazepapers describing lesbians and gay men in the most offensive and bigoted fashion — nor to protect the lesbians and gay men who will suffer in violent attacks as a result of the hatred that is stirred up.

An earlier News of the World carried a mind-boggling 'investigative report' on London's huge gay club Heaven at Charing Cross, describing the 'perverted' activities of 'the gays' — and making bizarre allegations of beer served with fresh blood in it.

Things could get very nasty — which is why Clause 28 must be stopped. A demonstration in Manchester on 20 February promises to be the biggest lesbian and gay rights demonstration ever. It would be good if Labour and trade union banners were visible on it.

Waldheim

Exposed

Austrian President and former United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim knew about Nazi atrocities during World War Two and failed to do anything about them.

That is the verdict of a commission of independent historians investigating allegations into Waldheim's wartime activities.

Waldheim reportedly insisted that certain aspects of the report be changed. Although the report does not claim that

Waldheim himself committed any atrocities, it is a clear indictment of his wartime record.

Various issues are posed by the report's findings. How could someone with Waldheim's past be elected UN Secretary-General? And how will the Austrian people react?

At the time of Waldheim's election last year, there were clear indications that his popularity had increased as a result of the scandal — an alarming suggestion of Austrian anti-semitism.

£1.8 bn

According to a Commons select committee, since 1980-1 NHS cash for hospitals has fallen £1.8 billion behind what would be needed to avoid cuts in service. That's 18% of the £10 billion budget for hospitals.

So much for the Tories' faked figures for ever-rising spending on the health service.

Profits

According to a table published in the Sunday Times last weekend, many big British companies are making more than £1 of profit for each £1 they pay in wages. Of every £2 (or more) of value that workers in those companies add to products by their labour, only £1 goes to the workers, and over £1 goes to the boss.

Glaxo makes £2.09 profits for every £1 wages; Rio Tinto Zinc, £1.23; British Telecom, £1.16; and Marks and Spencers, £1.09. Top of the league is Amstrad, which makes a staggering £18.36 profit for each £1 wages.



Tube safety cut

The government supported London Underground management in its resistance to Fire Brigade demands for safety measures, according to revelations in the Guardian.

In 1980 the Fire Brigade called for better provision for getting passengers out of Heathrow Central station in a fire. It pointed

out that up to 2,000 passengers, most with heavy luggage, could be trapped underground if a fire started.

Department of Transport officials backed up the Underground's claim that the station should be exempt from ordinary fire regulations, and the row eventually ended with a compromise.

Nurses' non-leader

"He's got this wonderful grey smoked-glass table and leather arm-chairs... You should see his fine paintings and rosewood furniture... He enjoys spending money and has incredibly good taste..."

Some big-business plutocrat? No, this is Trevor Clay, head of the no-strike nurses' union RCN, profiled in the Independent last week.

Nearly all trade union

leaders live on a completely different standard from their members, but Clay takes it to extremes. While student nurses are on less than £60 a week, Clay gets £40,000 a year.

Other RCN leaders have made themselves infamous by sitting on District Health Authorities where they have voted to push through cuts.

Rover's witch-hunt subsidiary

The Rover Group (formerly British Leyland) runs a special subsidiary company to

vet job applicants for political activity.

According to Granada TV's 'World in Action' team, Rover's subsidiary B.G. Research, in Uxbridge, has operated since 1974 as a vetting agency. The procedures were set up by a former assistant Chief Constable, Eric Gregory, and include close liaison with the right-wing Economic League.

B.G. Research's official accounts show an accumulated loss of £19,000, though it is not certain that the bosses have had value for money. In 1983 a number of Socialist Action supporters were witch-hunted out of the Cowley car factory, but the vetting had not stopped them getting jobs in the first place.

Wages

Despite the speed-up in British industry, it still lags far behind other advanced countries in productivity, according to recent research.

Investigators at Warwick University found that in 1986 US workers, on average, produced 2.67 times as much as British workers, and Japanese workers produced 1.76 times as much. Britain's relative position had improved very little since 1980, when US productivity was 2.73 times Britain's, and Japanese 1.96.

Britain's lower wages, so the researchers argue, actually cause lower productivity, through reducing morale and reducing pressure on bosses to bring in new technology. Better-paid workers in the US, West Germany, Japan and other countries are more cost-effective than low-paid workers in Britain.

Rising inequality

Inequality is increasing. Professional workers in management and administration got real pay rises of 29% between 1979 and 1986, while male manual workers won an increase of only 6%. Service industries such as catering and cleaning, dominated by women workers, showed pay rises of about 8 per cent.

The effect of these inequalities has been doubled by the Tories' tax changes, benefiting the highly-paid but increasing the tax burden on the poor.

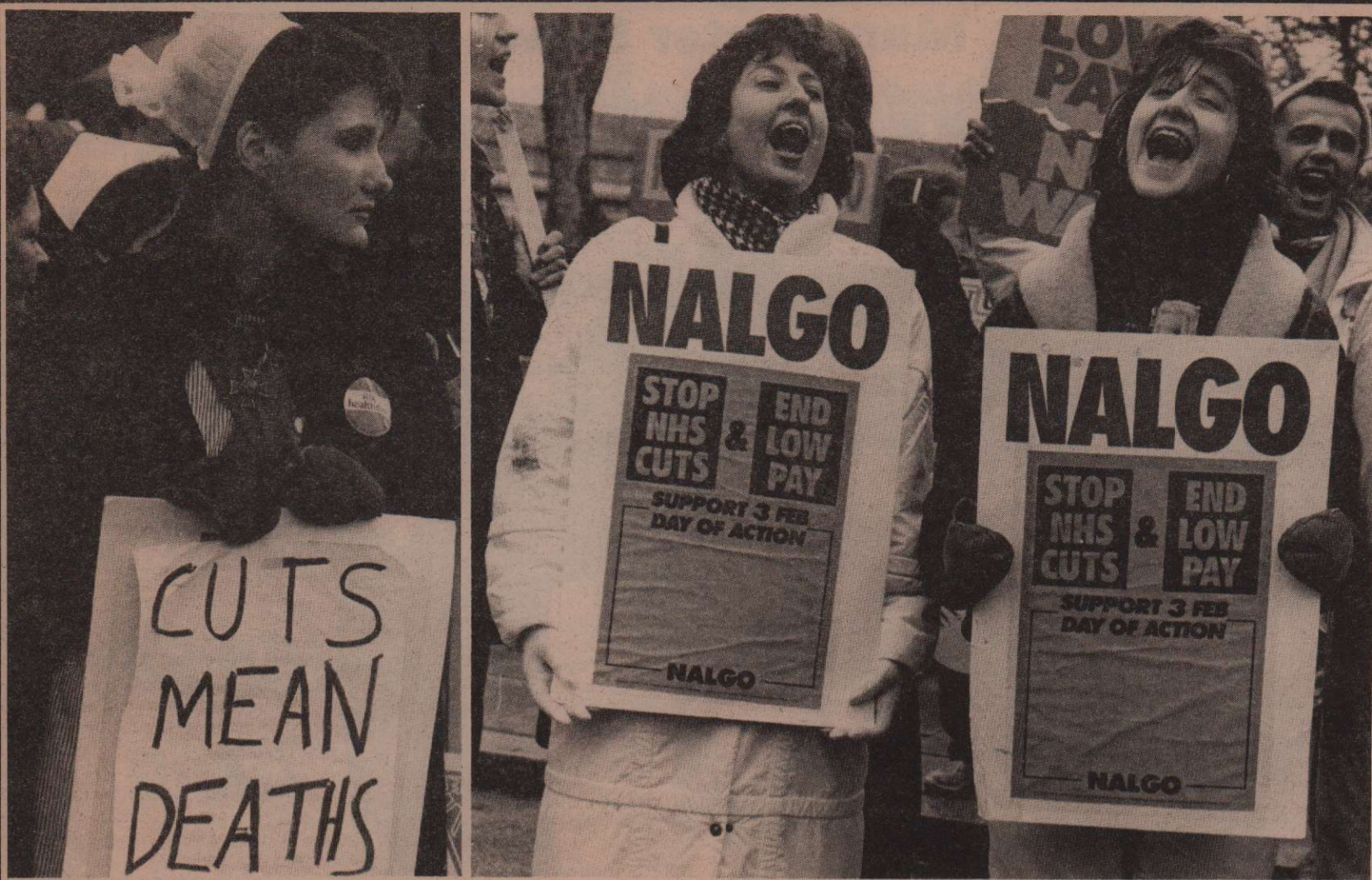
The fight back at Ford could be the beginning of a mass revolt by millions of workers who have had a smaller and smaller slice

of the cake in recent years while the pressure on them to produce more has increased.

Pay-Uni

Think you'll fail your A levels? If Fred Holliday, head of Durham University, gets his way, then it won't matter — as long as your parents are rich and prepared to pay.

Holliday wants the university to make good cuts in government funding by selling student-places to applicants who don't have the exam grades but do have the cash.



All out for the health workers

From page 1

The Scottish TUC has called a day of action on 24 February and invited other workers to strike alongside the health workers. In Edinburgh the Trades Council is co-ordinating solidarity strikes. In Wales there is to be a day of action on 1 March.

This bubbling anger and resentment needs to be focused and coordinated. The concern that other workers feel for the state of the NHS must be transformed into solidarity action with the NHS workforce.

This Monday, 8th, a 70-strong meeting of the all-London strike co-ordinating committee voted unanimously to make 15 March, Budget Day, a day of national strike action in the NHS, and to call on the TUC to organise a one-day general strike on the same day.

The TUC's day of protest on Saturday 5 March should be used to build up momentum for strike action on Budget Day. We need hundreds of thousands of trade unionists on the streets of London on 5 March.

The main weakness of the action so far has been the lack of co-ordination. The rank-and-file stewards' committees and strike committees that have sprung up around the country need to be drawn together.

A national NHS shop stewards' conference would provide the mechanism for translating the anger of health workers into sustained action.

It would provide a body which could organise national action and lead the dispute if the TUC and health union leaders refuse to act.

Without national shop stewards' coordination, there is a real danger that the dispute could degenerate into small scale, localised and uncoordinated action.

Another weakness of the present dispute is the lack of clear policy for the NHS. A health unions' national stewards' conference could also thrash out a series of demands for the defence of the NHS around which all health workers could unite.

Those on the left who say we must just rely on the TUC to call solidarity action are failing to see the potential power and authority of a national network of NHS shop stewards.

**The Tories can be beaten!
All out for the health workers!**

STOP PRESS
CoHSE nationally has called a day of action, including strikes, for 14 March, the day before Budget Day.

The time to fight

EDITORIAL

A new wave of industrial militancy is sweeping Britain. Nurses, health workers, seafarers, car workers and pit deputies have shown that they are sick of nine years of Tory rule.

Teachers and local government workers are still in revolt at the Tories' onslaught on the welfare state and the miners have not forgotten the lessons of the 1984-5 miners' strike.

The Tories have grown fat and smug. Health Minister Edwina Currie talks of a "thumping big expansion in the private sector" (for the rich) while children die because of lack of proper health care in inadequately funded, understaffed hospitals.

Thatcher says the NHS is not in crisis. She celebrates the longest continuous period of concerted ruling class leadership this century with champagne, while schools crumble, jobs are lost in their thousands, hospitals close and homelessness and poverty abound.

But cracks are appearing in the seemingly monolithic facade of Thatcher's economic experiment. Just recently hundreds of yuppies were slung onto the dole in a bigger stock market crash than 1929. At a time when even City brokers are wearing out their Guccis looking for work, the working class — who have always borne the brunt of the crisis — now show signs of calling time on the Tories' spivs' government.

Now is the time for a co-

ordinated offensive by the working class. By linking the struggles of rank and file workers in the NHS, the car industry, the ports, and local government, the Tories can be defeated and driven out of office.

The leadership of the TUC and the Labour Party should take up the lead given by the rank-and-file. A one-day general strike in support of the health workers — linking them with other struggles — would give workers tremendous confidence and raise morale for the battles to come.

Far too long the leaders of the unions and the Labour Party have been content to stick to the agenda set by the Tories. Timid and vacillating they listen to the voices of the whining pessimists who want to keep to begging crumbs from the Tory table.

A Gallup Poll in the Daily Telegraph has revealed that 92% of the public want to see the nurses get

a large pay rise. 79% of respondents to a Gallup poll were sympathetic to nurses' strike action. 67% of Tory voters disagreed with Thatcher that nurses were deliberately hitting patients.

Clearly something is badly wrong if a majority of Tory voters would vote for a strike in defence of the NHS and Labour's leaders won't.

Tragic

It would be tragic if Labour threw away a great chance to identify itself with a popular strike. We need to see Labour leaders down on the picket line with health workers.

On Monday night in Parliament, Labour spokesperson Michael Meacher, said that if the Tories allowed the Ford strike to go ahead it would be "the biggest possible abnegation of responsibility."

This misses the point. If we are going to defeat the government the strike must proceed and a thousand strikes like it, coordinated closely and supported by the Labour leadership. Neil Kinnock and Robin

Cook have said they wouldn't vote for a nurses' strike. If they don't support it, that's the biggest abnegation of their responsibility they could manage.

The workers have shown the way. Now the leadership must show themselves worthy of their support by backing them and fighting for them.

The gains represented by the NHS and the very existence of the trade union movement were not won without decades of rank and file struggle by workers. We must defend them and struggle to sweep Thatcher's government into the dustbin and replace it with a government that will fight for the interests of our class, just as Thatcher fights for the interests of hers.

Neil Kinnock has called for Budget Day on 15 March to be NHS day. Better if it's the day of a general strike in support of the health workers!

Now is the time to attack — while workers have the confidence and the militancy to hit Thatcher where it hurts.

Who'll rehabilitate Gorbachev?

Akhmadzham Adylov rose from being a tractor driver to being boss of a state farm in the USSR by writing anonymous letters to denounce people whose jobs he wanted. Eventually he became rich, he had his own private prison, and he had workers whipped when they crossed him.

Now Adylov is in jail. And quite likely the person who denounced him is, in turn, making his way up the hierarchy of bureaucracy and corruption.

Fifty years after Stalin's Great Terror, the USSR still belongs to the careerist, the informer and the spiv. That is what makes the recent official decision to 'rehabilitate' Nikolai Bukharin and Alexei Rykov so macabre.

It is good if people in the USSR and Eastern Europe will get a chance to read what the people whom Stalin purged wrote, and an opportunity to discuss the fact that

their government framed up those people.

In Poland a group called the Orange Alternative has marched with a banner reading 'We demand the full rehabilitation of comrade Leon Trotsky'. If the present rulers of the USSR disavow the Great Terror, as they want to, then sooner or later they will have to disavow Stalin's slanders on Trotsky and let their people read what Trotsky wrote.

All that is good. But who are Gorbachev and his colleagues to say that Bukharin or Rykov or Trotsky should or should not be 'rehabilitated'? They are the people who today administer the system which Stalin moulded and consolidated with his purges.

Between 1934 and 1940 Stalin murdered every single one of the Bolshevik leaders then surviving from the time of the 1917 Revolution, with the sole exceptions of Molotov, Kalinin and Kollontai. The resolute oppositionists (the Trotskyists), the shattered but still

possibly critical ex-oppositionists and even the loyal Stalinists — all the people with any flicker of allegiance to the working class or socialism, or any independent mind, were killed.

The 'Party Congress' of 1934 was already '100% Stalinist'. Not a single delegate dared oppose the official line. Yet before the next congress, 1,108 of the 1,966 delegates to the 1934 Congress had been arrested as 'counter-revolutionaries'. Only 2% of the rank and file delegates survived to reappear at the next Congress. Some 100 of the 139 Central Committee members elected in 1934 were shot.

Some, like Bukharin and Rykov, were pushed by torture and threats to their families into making 'confessions' in court. Others died silently in the prisons.

About one million people were shot as 'counter-revolutionaries'. Another ten million, maybe more, perished in the labour camps and in the collectivisation campaigns. About ten million people lived in the labour camps at any one time.

This campaign of terror, outstripping even what the Nazis did in Germany, made the USSR even more of a dog-eat-dog society than the Western market economies. In this supposedly socialist country, no-one trusted their neighbour. No-one cared for the common good. Everyone looked after themselves first. The careerist, the toady, and the tell-tale ruled.

Once the terror had done its work, it could be relaxed — and it has been by Stalin's successors, including Gorbachev. Despair and demoralisation, rather than direct fear, underpin the Kremlin's rule today. Even Gorbachev's most radical talk of reform does not propose introducing anything that would allow ordinary workers to speak out freely, to organise, to meet, to assert collective control.

The crook and the supergrass still rule in the USSR. One day the working class will purge them. And nobody will come to rehabilitate them.

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
01-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone, Monday evening.
Editor: John O'Mahony
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd (TU). 01-358 1344.

Published by Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Printed by East West Graphics (TU). Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the view of Socialist Organiser.

Strike in Sheffield

By Andrea Warner,
NUPE nursing steward at
Middlewood Psychiatric
Hospital, Sheffield.

There's a lot of support in hospitals and from the public. We had walked out at Middlewood throughout the day. Everyone was dead enthusiastic and wanted to make their feelings known and say, "We've had enough, we're not taking any more. We are working beyond our capabilities."

People seemed to think we were out for various reasons. No-one was really clear. It was generally agreed that it was not about nurses' pay but about saving the health service. There is a need for some clarity in this. We have started to organise to sort this out.

I'm disillusioned with the lack of leadership. And so are a lot of other people — particularly those involved in the dispute in 1982. I think there's a turning of the tide, with Ford's, the Seamen's Union and so on. What we need is an increase of 20% for every health worker, a shorter working week — a 35 hour week has been talked about.

I think the Labour Party should push for tax increases if necessary to defend the NHS. Some of our full timers were calling our picket lines 'protests'. At first I thought this was wrong. But maybe we can use this to our advantage. The law makes no restrictions on protest lines.

A COHSE member at Middlewood told Socialist Organiser:

"We found support overwhelming from the members, but as soon as we try to put in into action, we get frustrated by the branch officials. We need some leadership. Branch officials are making themselves scarce. It's obvious the whole push for this is coming from the grass roots.

The Friday before Wednesday's day of action I went around each ward on my night shift and found at least one person in each ward that wanted to walk out at midnight. That's 37 out of just over 50. It was an amazing level of support. We took it to the branch and from there asked the management to provide cover. At first they agreed, but then backed out. If we'd told the press we were all out from midnight the management couldn't have backed out from their agreement.

As it was we had 13 out on my shift — that was the most we could manage while still providing cover.

Nonetheless they were trying to intimidate us with threats over contracts. Our problem is that emergency cover levels are above what we have right now!

Our main worry is that if we don't get a lead the whole thing will dissipate and the whole organisation will be on the shoulders of those of us left from the 1982 dispute.

I think the support from the Frickley picket was great.

Why we struck for the NHS

JOHNY STONE, Branch delegate, Frickley-NUPE explains

The consensus of the general meeting of Frickley was that nurses had a case and a just complaint. The NHS does need fighting for. What's happening in the NHS is just another step down the road of Thatcher's privatisation of the UK.

It's the same in British Coal. The statistics that we quoted don't convince people. Of course we need money for the NHS. The opinion polls suggest that people would forego tax cuts for the NHS as previously envisaged; as it was formed as a universal service for all people and all classes.

The consensus at my branch was that it's a worthy cause and needs supporting. We are planning to put a bus on for the TUC demonstration and are going to take a banner.

There was some confusion on Wednesday about why only Frickley was picketed out. Let's hope that next time the action is better coordinated.

By Paul Wooley

Over 30 health stewards met to set up a Manchester-wide joint stewards' organisation last Friday, 5th.

Hospitals in Rochdale, Salford, Oldham and Manchester were represented.

The meeting agreed to coordinate and build for Manchester's one-day strike on 19 February to produce a regular

Manchester Stewards

bulletin and to call for solidarity action by workers outside the NHS.

There was a determined mood at the meeting. Many stewards reported rank and file members taking matters into their own hands, demanding that stewards organise action, and local communities rallying to support health

workers.

A number of new local joint shop stewards' committees have been set up, and old ones revived.

All the signs are that Friday 19th will be an important day of action in Manchester — solidarity action has already been promised from the Confederation

of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, TGWU ACTSS, Manchester City NALGO and several individual workplaces.

The joint stewards' organisation should use its bulletin and the action on the 19th to call for a national health stewards' conference and a day of action on budget day, 15 March.

This Wednesday, 10 February, is the North-West TUC's 'Hospital Vigil' Day. Mass gatherings are expected at St. Mary's and North Manchester Hospitals.

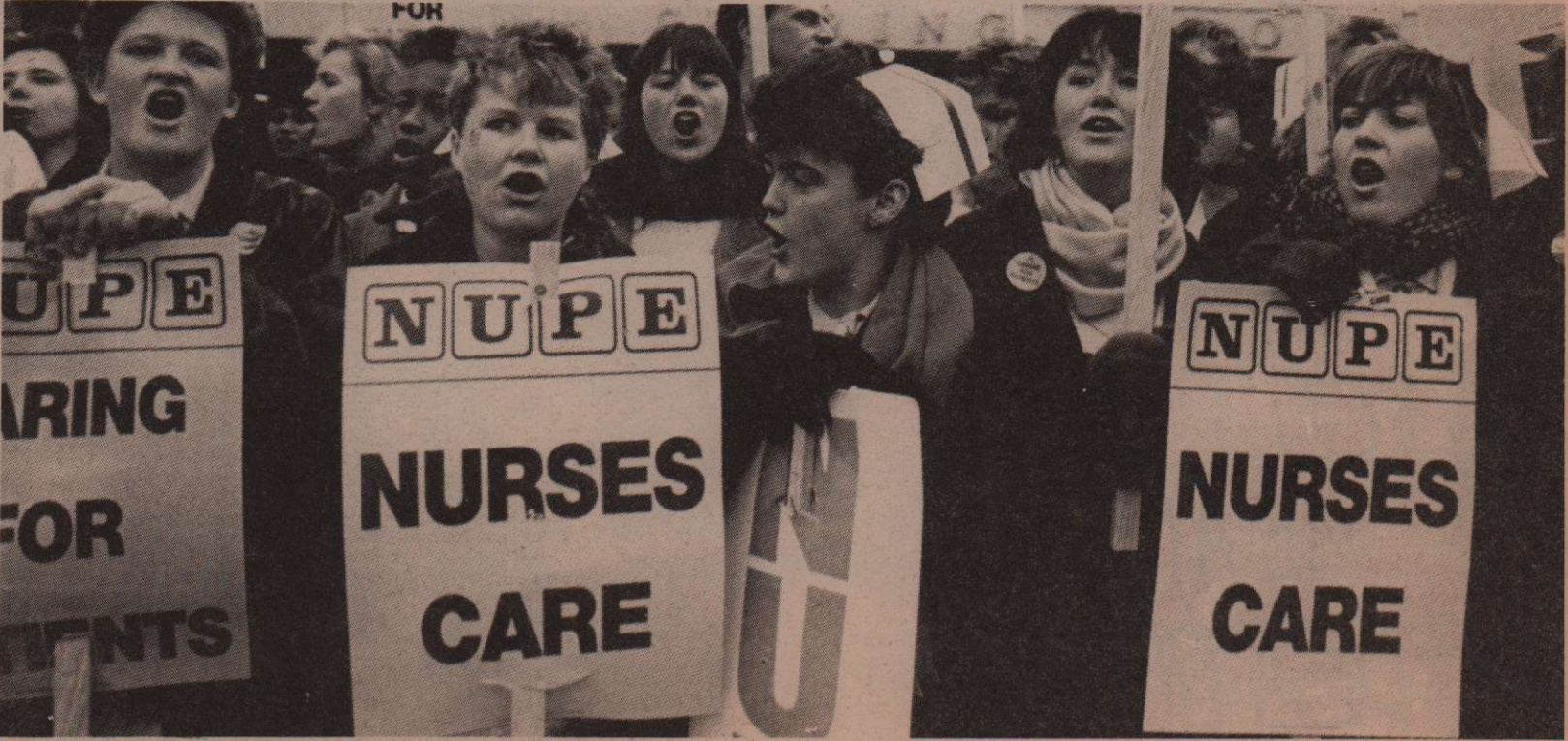


Photo: Ian Swindale.

Strikes spread in Scotland

By Stan Crooke

up that there will be no new money until 1992, and even at the best estimate that's a year after the system here collapses.

There are wards in here that are closed because they are due for upgrading but there is no money for this. Bread rations to the wards have been cut, supposedly as part of a 'healthy eating' plan — but they are still feeding patients chocolate biscuits full of sugar.

Staff in the post-room are now expected to handle not just mail but X-rays and specimens as well. The Health Board is providing half the funding for some important new equipment. We're expected to find the other half but we haven't got it."

Rose Reynolds, a NUPE shop steward in the catering department, summed up the problems faced by her members: "Our main problems are the lack of staff in the kitchens and the low wages we're paid. The shortage of staff means that the menus get cut, and the cleaning is not done properly.

Although feelings in the hospital are running high, especially as a reaction to provocative statements by Michael Forsyth and Winston Tayler (General Manager of Lothian Health Board), the unions ensured that the hospital was provided with emergency cover throughout the 24-hour strike despite management obstructiveness. Chris McClacken explained:

"Full emergency cover is being provided. We spent all day yesterday thrashing it out with management, but management just piddled around. We were supposed to be finished by half past two, but we were still talking at five, because of the way management were piddling around."

An example of how the Lothian Health Board is trying to undermine support for the dispute was provided by the strike on the following day (5 February) at the Edinburgh City Hospital. The hospital houses the sterilisation unit which serves all Edinburgh hospitals. The Health Board cancelled all non-emergency operations on 4, 5, and 8 February, blam-

ing this on the strike.

But pickets at the City Hospital denounced the Health Board's deceitfulness: "We're only out for one day, and yesterday we did a lot more work than usual, so there's no need to cancel operations for three days. It's just black propaganda and a cost-saving exercise on the part of management." And management's own concern for the health of patients at the hospital was reflected in the fact that they had milk transported round the wards in rubbish trailers.

As at the Royal Infirmary, support for the strike at the City Hospital, the third largest in Edinburgh, was overwhelming, with only the small ASTMS membership there voting against strike action.

Despite the dangers of demoralisation and confusion resulting from the health service unions leaders' strategy of 24-hour strikes and longer strikes by smaller selected groups of workers, support for the struggle against privatisation and for defence of the NHS remains solid.

Support for the dispute is also being organised amongst trade unions outside the NHS. At its last meeting Edinburgh Trades Council discussed the Day of Action called by the Scottish TUC for 24 February and is now appealing for the "maximum amount of support, including industrial action" on the day. Callum Macrae, Vice President of the Trades Council, told SO:

"We welcome the fact that other trade unionists are being asked to take action, particularly including industrial action, in support of health service workers, and we are calling on all trade unionists in the city to maximise the turnout for the demonstration on 24 February.

"For too long the labour movement has seemed to be immobilised and punch-drunk under the Tory onslaught, but we must make 24 February the start — and I emphasise it is only the start — of a fight back which will unite all trade unionists in a common cause."

CORRECTION: Last week's report on the NHS dispute in Scotland contained a misprint. "Health service union leaders adopted a strategy of a series of 24-hour strikes by workers in different hospitals, instead of strike action of longer duration by small selected groups of workers," should have read: "...24-hour strikes by workers in different hospitals, and also strike action of longer duration by..."

In the course of the past week, workers at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, the Edinburgh City Hospital, the Royal Sick Children's Hospital, the Princess Margaret Rose Orthopaedic Hospital, and the Lothian Health Board offices have taken strike action in opposition to plans to privatise catering and cleansing services.

Workers' anger at the plans for privatisation and the general lack of funding for the NHS has been heightened by the leaking of a secret Lothian Health Board report proposing the closure of four hospitals and three clinics in the Lothians.

A further source of anger is the

close links between Scottish Health Minister Michael Forsyth, a rabidly Thatcherite privatiser, and private contractors. Pritchards, the Association of British Launderers and Cleaners, and the Public and Local Services Efficiency Campaign are all clients of his public relations firm, Michael Forsyth Associates.

At the Royal Infirmary, the biggest hospital in the Lothians, the response to the 24-hour strike of last Thursday (4 February) was overwhelming. NALGO shop steward Chris McClacken outlined the dire situation at the hospital, even without the privatisation proposals being implemented:

"A consultants' report on this hospital has admitted that it is heading for a crisis and the services will collapse here in two or three years. The Health Board has owned

Action in Wales

A joint meeting of South Glamorgan, Mid-Glamorgan and Gwent stewards have decided to take up the call from nurses in Bridgend hospitals for an all-out strike on 1 March.

Following a very successful meeting of hundreds of nurses in COHSE, NUPE and RCN, it was decided to hold a strike ballot, which is expected to back strike action. The mood of London nurses is catching on down here.

The call has come from the membership — NUPE and COHSE nationally have done nothing to coordinate action or make us call for it. Instead they say they will stand by us. But what we need is positive leadership.

At the meeting to back the one day strike, it was stressed that 1 March would be about cuts in the NHS and not just nurses' pay. We also talked about getting other workers involved. The Wales TUC has not come forward with anything — so it is down to us to go to speak to different workplaces and get them to back us on 1 March.

The question was raised about nurses being threatened with the code of conduct.

But we felt that they couldn't

By Mary Williams

discipline 3000 nurses. There is safety in numbers. Also, it could be argued that we are complying with the code as we are demonstrating our concern for the patients by coming out on strike.

In South Glamorgan (Cardiff), nurses have been poorly organised. It is only now, when nurses see something being done and see the need to do something before we no longer have an NHS that they are turning round and saying 'enough is enough'. More nurses are leaving the RCN and getting organised by joining NUPE.

Now the RCN have called demonstrations on 27 February — obviously timed to divert from the strike on 1 March.

Another problem raised at the meeting was the fact that ancillary staff are reluctant about providing emergency cover when they come out on strike now as management are abusing it. It was felt that this might lead to nurses feeling they can't strike.

It was emphasised that we must work together in drawing up emergency cover and taking control ourselves, rather than letting management set the pace.

'Other workers will support us'

Mark: Between the various unions (GMBU, COHSE, NUPE and NALGO) about 150 came out at this hospital, of which about 60 were nurses. Many were student nurses, but there were a dozen staff nurses.

Gag: I think more will come out next time. At the Whittington, up to 2-3 days before, a lot of people did not really know what was going on. It was the COHSE nurses producing a leaflet and handing it around the wards that helped. There is talk about a strike on 15 March, Budget Day. With better preparation there will be more people.

Elaine: I think most nurses now realise they can do something about the situation. But it did not just involve nurses, and it was not just about pay. It was about saving the NHS and it was for everybody.

Jackie: I thought Wednesday went very well. It really gained us public support, and we got that through striking. Everybody driving by acknowledged us. Patients came out, hobbling on their crutches, to stand with us in the freezing cold. Little old ladies, everybody — apart from the Hampstead and Highgate lot, driving up the hill in their Rolls Royces — was tooting their horns, waving to us, bringing us cups of tea and doughnuts on the picket line. I don't know where they came from, they just kept appearing.

Mike: People are now talking about more general action on 15 March. I am all for that, but how serious is it? I don't think the TUC would back a general strike.

Mark: We should try to force them to jump. But other workers will take action. On Wednesday we were joined on the picket line by CPSSA members from Archway Tower DHSS, and Islington NALGO council workers sent their support. They had their own action on the following day.

ACTSS workers sent a message of support to the dinnertime meeting. In Yorkshire, Frickley miners came out on strike for the day. There is massive support amongst the general trade union movement, and ordinary workers.

Mike: Yes, the support is there but how possible is a general strike?

Mark: Not immediately, but we have to aim for 15 March and start working for it from beneath. We need to get a shop stewards' meeting to call it; call on the official trade union movement to take up that call but organise for it ourselves anyway. Get delegations out to different workplaces to argue the case. Bus garages, offices, factories, wherever...

Mike: I heard that in Coventry recently workers struck in support of psychiatric hospital workers whose hospital was threatened with closure. They sent delegations around different factories and got sympathy strike action which was unofficial.

Andrea: On Wednesday the RCN told us we could work to rule. We were 100% behind that. We felt that, if we could not strike, then we would back you up, and all the

Mark, Gag, Elaine, Jackie, Mike and Andrea, nurses at Whittington Hospital in North London, spoke to John Bloxam about their strike last week and what to do now.

RCN members in the ward did that. We refused to deal with those who weren't emergencies and told the consultant that.

I went to an RCN meeting last week and all the members seemed to want to strike. They want to change the rules. But we are also thinking of joining either COHSE or NUPE.

Jackie: Emergency cover is essential because people might die. If it was your mother or child who was knocked down and you were brought to casualty then you would not question it!

Mike: That is the problem with indefinite strike action — it would be difficult to organise emergency cover for such a period. But one way we dealt with the problem on Wednesday was to send a lot of patients home if it was not essential they got treatment on that day.

Andrea: Something has to be done given the way things are going in the Health Service. Nobody has ever listened to the RCN. They haven't stood up for their rights. I can't honestly see Margaret Thatcher bowing down to strikers, but something has to be done. And we have got the public on our side.

Mike: One problem is the lack of coordination between the different parts of Britain. There should be much better coordination.

Mark: If the London strike committee on Monday called for a national conference of all health worker shop stewards, I am sure there would be a tremendous response.

Mike: Other workers will support us because they use the NHS. 90% of the population do. Only 10% don't, and unfortunately they are the ones who have the power. We need our NHS.

Jackie: I would say the same thing. We have all got to stand together — they are walking all over workers. Anyone in the caring professions is treated like shit.

Andrea: It's not just the nurses, it's all the health workers and the patients. Up until now this country has had a National Health Service it can be proud of, but now it is just so demoralising.

Mike: The money must come from income tax. The idea of charging patients for beds makes me vomit.

Mark: And from defence spending. One of the biggest cheers at the rally on Wednesday night was when Jeremy Corbyn said they should stop spending the money on Trident and start spending it on the NHS.

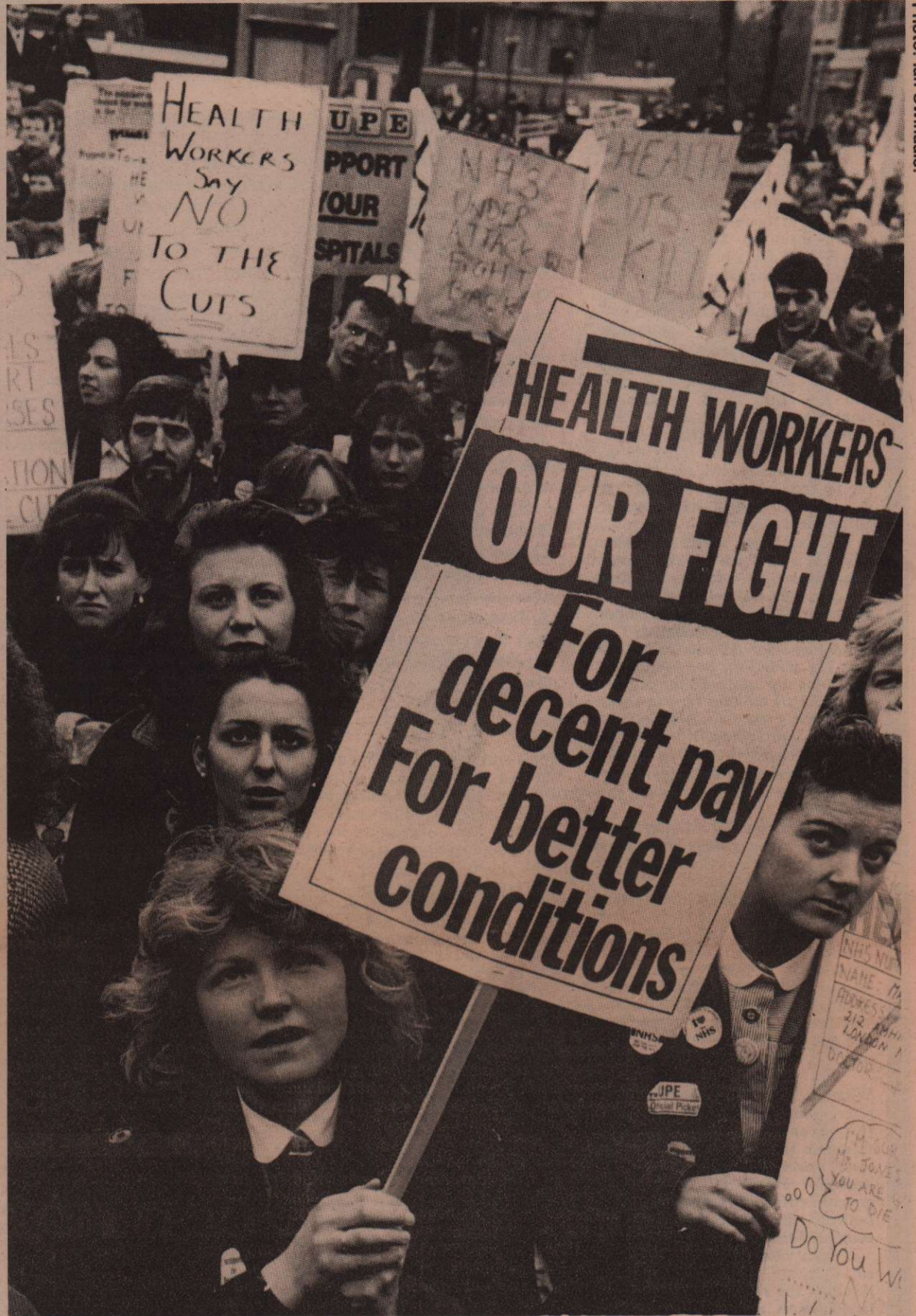


Photo: Ian Swindale.

Over 2,000 health workers took part in a march and demonstration in London which was blocked by police.

NHS: aims and reality

Throughout their nine years of office the Tories have claimed that "the NHS is safe with us".

The lie to this is provided by examining the objectives which lay at the heart of the formation of the NHS. In the 1944 White Paper 'A National Health Service', which lay the foundations for the NHS, these were spelt out:

Objects in view:

1) To ensure that everyone in the country — irrespective of means, age, sex or occupation — shall have equal opportunity to benefit from the best and most up-to-date medical and allied services available.

2) To provide, therefore, for all who want it, a comprehensive service covering every branch of medical and allied activity from the care of minor ailments to major medicine and surgery; to include the care of mental as well as physical health and all specialist services, e.g. for tuberculosis, cancer and infectious diseases, maternity, frac-

By Dr George Davey Smith

ture and orthopaedic treatment, and others; to include all normal general services, e.g. the family doctor, the midwife and nurse, the care of the teeth and of the eyes, the day-to-day care of the child; and to include all necessary drugs and medicines and a wide range of appliances.

3) To divorce the care of health from questions of personal means or other factors irrelevant to it; to provide the service free of charge (apart from certain possible charges in respect of appliances) and to encourage a new attitude to health — the easier obtaining of advice early, the promotion of good health rather than the treatment of bad." *A National Health Service, 1944.*

Let's weigh these initial aims of the NHS against current reality. Access to health care is not equal for all — the poor, people from ethnic minorities and people living in deprived areas of the country ex-

perience both the worst health and have the worst experiences of the health service. The growth of private medicine under the Tories will obviously make this inequality in access to health care even worse.

Health care is becoming less and less divorced from personal means. Charges have been introduced for prescriptions — and people whose income is just above the low-pay exemption level pay as much as the very rich. Furthermore proposals in the latest health White Paper, 'Promoting Better Health', will introduce full payments for dental care and for ophthalmic services.

And what has the commitment to 'promoting better health' meant? Ignoring all the evidence showing much worse health in the poor, the unemployed and the badly housed, the government have just one message — "look after yourself". Even given the government's record in distorting the truth, to claim that the NHS is safe, whilst dismantling all of the principles upon which it was founded, is an extraordinary piece of double talk.

STOP HEALTH CUTS
TUC
National demonstration
March 5

Assemble: 11am, Victoria Embankment
March: 12 noon, via Parliament Square
Rally: 2pm Hyde Park

Poland after the

What attitude did you take on the referendum?

I thought that regardless of the content of the questions, our answers and our intentions, participating in the referendum had only one meaning. The government was looking for a popular endorsement. It was the same with the 1946 referendum. Instead of asking us the fundamental question — whether we wanted a Communist Party government in Poland brought in by the Red Army — they asked us three substitute questions: Did we want social reforms, a single-chamber parliament and borders on the Oder-Neisse line (1). In participating in this referendum, we could say that we relinquished the western territories, but not that we could do without a Communist government.

We could not make the same mistake as before. In the recent referendum, we were asked to give up our right to defend ourselves against exploitation. On December 13, 1981, the regime responded to the demand for reforms to be carried out under the supervision of society by instituting a state of war. Instead of looking for the cause of the crisis, they accused Solidarnosc of provoking it, and the reform theme was used to justify the continual price increases, inflation and restricting the rights of the workers.

After six years of uninterrupted reforms, young people no longer have any chance of finding a place to live, and most families have been tightening their belts for a long time, despite working harder and taking on second jobs. The most burning question today is the defence of workers' material interests. So, what had to be done was to call for a boycott with the slogan, "By boycotting the referendum, you are protesting against exploitation!"

What is your assessment of the referendum results? According to the French press, Professor Geremek (Lech Walesa's main advisor) considers that it was a setback for everybody, because the government compromised the ideas both of the referendum and the economic reform.

If such views have been expressed, they are utter nonsense. The result of the referendum is a spectacular blow against Jaruzelski. It testifies to the fact that Polish society no longer believes in any reform by the Communists. This is the result of 40 years of a Communist regime. Jaruzelski told Moscow that he had everything under control, and that he had achieved total normalisation. He could even claim that there was general support for the economic reform, because it was supported by Lech Walesa, the Solidarnosc leadership and its experts. The referendum showed that all that was nothing but propaganda.

People gained confidence after the referendum. They feel more sure of themselves. Only they no longer think, as they did before, that there is a leadership and that it will lead their struggle. After I got out of prison in the summer of 1984, I travelled through the country for a year. I discussed with the main leaders of Solidarnosc, as well as with ordinary activists in the plants. I could see then that combativity was flagging, and that the leadership's authority was also on the wane — it was the TK at the time. Today, the evolution of the situation will depend to a large extent on the correlation between these two processes. If the leader-

Polish workers struck last week at the Ursus tractor factory in Warsaw and the Skogar leather goods works in Lodz, demanding wage rises to compensate fully and immediately for the recent price rises.

The government has announced a series of price rises which, it says, will bring inflation this year to 45% and cut real wages by 8%. Jaruzelski organised a referendum on price rises last November, and failed to get the majority he wanted, but the IMF insists on the price rises and they are going ahead anyway.

2,000 people marched behind Solidarnosc banners in Gdansk on the day before the price rises came into effect, chanting 'Down with the price rises'. And the next day there was a demonstration in Warsaw protesting at the Rumanian government's repression of the recent workers' rebellion in Brasov.

The wave of protest will strengthen a trend within Solidarnosc which has been arguing for the movement to drop its recently-adopted support for market economics and to focus on defending workers' living standards. Andrzej Gwiazda is one of 22 well-known Solidarnosc leaders who wrote a letter to Lech Walesa last September expounding this view. In this interview, reprinted from the magazine 'International Viewpoint', Gwiazda explains his ideas.

ship's authority continues to decline, but not combativity, then people will begin to organise autonomously. Before, these two processes were parallel. Now, even before the referendum, the ranks had begun to think independently. The referendum result is the expression of that.

What do you think of the position taken on October 25 by the Solidarnosc National Executive Commission (KKW) on the referendum?

It was the worst imaginable. I was in a small provincial city at the time, and I discussed it with a Solidarnosc activist there. He told me, "You don't understand anything, because Walesa says that the reform is a good thing, but that there is no need to vote." The whole Solidarnosc leadership took the same position as Walesa, that society is hoping for an economic reform, that this reform is necessary but that, despite everything, it was better not to go to the polls. Onyszkiewicz, the representative of the Solidarnosc leadership, said that it was better to go fishing or gathering mushrooms, because in any case the referendum results would not matter. That was very bad propaganda. On the other hand, the government conducted more intelligent propaganda than ever. But despite this, the people refused to give their support. They are starting to think independently.

In your opinion why was the government so mistaken in its predictions?

Everyone is asking themselves that question today. Why did Jaruzelski hold this referendum? I think that the team in power today is taken in a lot less by its own propaganda than those that preceded it. But it let its head be turned by the Solidarnosc leadership's propaganda. It thought that this leadership faithfully represented the opinion of society.

I have heard such an opinion voiced by a representative of party and police circles. All you had to do, according to them, was listen to Walesa, the Solidarnosc leadership and the church and you would know it all. That is what convinced them to hold the referendum.

They did not realise that the views of the Solidarnosc leadership had diverged from those of society. That is because society has no way of expressing itself, not even in the

underground press.

The Solidarnosc leadership and the groups linked to it have established their monopoly over this press. The existence of the independent press and publishing houses is a marvellous thing. I say that without any irony. But the distribution of the press and independent publications is weak.

In Warsaw, it seems otherwise, because there is a plant press in the Ursus tractor factory, in the Huta Warszawa steelworks, in the FSO auto factory and in the Polkolor electronics factory.

But there are provincial cities and more generally many regions that this press does not reach. So, despite the existence of this press, the Western radio stations remain the main source of information. But these stations are no less given to censorship than those of the Reds. A document not approved by Walesa, the Solidarnosc leadership or its experts has no chance of getting on the air.

Consequently, the Solidarnosc leadership have made the same error as the PZPR (the Polish CP) — they have imposed their monopoly on the independent press.

Only their views are broadcast by Western radio stations; the others are eliminated. And so these groups are convinced that the whole of society shares their opinions. This news monopoly functioned effectively for a period, as it did for the Communist system.

Every individual thought, "I have a different view, but all the others think like the press" (the clandestine press in our case). Before the referendum people said, "I will not go, but the others certainly will." It was not like that.

What do you think of General Jaruzelski's economic reform programme?

In the first place, the regime is basing this reform on an economic theory of the free market. The West demands that Jaruzelski base himself on this theory, and this is demanded above all by the International Monetary Fund.

But this is absurd, because there is no free market; this theory has no application here. Secondly, our economists, who are trying energetically to convince us of the soundness of their reform, are people who have undoubtedly never



Solidarnosc demonstrates, 1987

seen a factory, who have no idea of what is going on in industry nor of how the production process unfolds.

They imagine that a big drop in the standard of living will lead to an increase in labour productivity and to an improvement in the quality of products. Since they have nothing to do with productive labour, they think that if you drive the proles to get on with the job under the goad of hunger or the whip, that they will work hard enough to raise the standard of living of the others. In fact, all those who are discussing how to get society to work have living standards several times higher than most.

I am working now as a painter on a heating centre building site in Ciechanow in the centre of the country. A welder of scaffolding earns 25,000 zlotys a month (2). A top category welder with dozens of years of seniority earns 30,000 zlotys. This is what the wages of most workers are like. Of course, there are enterprises where wages are better — steelworks or shipyards. But I am talking about typical enterprises, like mine. Such wages are not enough today to feed a family, so most Poles are looking for supplementary jobs to do after their eight hours, obviously manual jobs.

For example, the boss on my building site clears away rubble after his workday, and the foreman at the end of his eight hours lays paving stones. And they are asking these people to let their real wages be cut in half! And they tell them, "If you want to keep your standard of living, you have to increase pro-

ductivity." I don't doubt that they will manage it. I don't know how, but through their collective intelligence they will do it. Only at that time, I will refuse to go up with my brush onto the scaffolding built by my fellow workers, because I would be afraid that it would collapse under my weight.

If the Polish economy is sick, this sickness is caused by norms that are too high and therefore lead to a false productivity and in reality endanger immense losses. In 1980-1, I was invited to drink coffee with some ministers, because they wanted to know what I thought should be done to get the economy moving again. I told them that before anything else they had to lower the quantitative production norms by 40 per cent without cutting wages and create the conditions for quality production.

It is only after that we can start to increase productivity, while increasing wages proportionally.

But the regime has always done exactly the opposite and this produces nothing, because Polish workers are very imaginative.

I have been working in industry for thirty years, and the workers still surprise me by their imagination. Their norms are increased, and despite that they manage to maintain their wages at the same level. I am a worker with a number of skills. I have worked as a lathe operator, a welder, and now I am a painter. So, I can judge how much time is necessary to make a given product.

The norms are such that it seems totally impossible to do the work in the assigned time, but they manage

... referendum



Andrzej Gwiazda

a statement, and I intended to publish articles on this affair in the underground press. At that time, they were still publishing what I wrote, because I had just got out of prison and had to be reckoned with.

Unfortunately, Father Popieluszko's murder diverted everybody's attention, and the regime then took advantage of that to force through the new contracts, without arousing any protests.

This question simply did not interest either the TKK or the regional leaderships, because they did not feel that they were in the shoes of union leadership. That has not changed.

You are very hard on the present leadership of Solidarnosc.

Yes, that's so. I have a negative assessment of the work of the comrades who make up the KKW and the preceding leaderships.

I am in complete disagreement with their political line, with their conception of an understanding with the regime and their attempts to orient to it. I should add that I am equally shocked by the attitude they took following the recent arrest of Kornel Morawiecki, the underground leader of the Fighting Solidarnosc Organisation. As you know, the regime accuses Morawiecki of terrorist activity.

The KKW poses the problem in the following way: Solidarnosc has never been implicated in terrorism, but despite that we have to protest. In fact, that means the KKW giving legitimacy to the accusations made by the prosecutor and the propaganda of the government's representative, Jerzy Urban, who says that Fighting Solidarnosc is a terrorist organisation.

That is an inadmissible and scandalous attitude. In common with some other independent activists — including Halina Mikolajska — we drew up a statement on this matter

(3). If the differences that exist in the opposition were to lead us to treat each other the way Walesa and the KKW did Morawiecki, then the government would very soon be able to put us all in prison, including the comrades of the KKW, because no one would want to defend us, and rightly so.

Simply they do not respect the technological process. From the outside, the product seems to meet specification. It even has, if necessary, the indicated dimensions, but this product maintains its use value ten times less time than it should, because it is produced by eliminating 80 per cent of the specified technical operations. All the workers' inventiveness is directed toward finding means for eliminating them.

The present economic reform will force workers to find more tricks of this sort. On paper, productivity will increase, and they will therefore maintain the level of their wages. But the economy will breakdown and fall more.

You are one of the signatories to the letter of the 22 Solidarnosc leaders to Lech Walesa. In this letter you criticise the Solidarnosc leadership's lack of interest in defending workers' living standards and you demand the convocation of the National Commission elected by the union's congress in order to solve the problem of its leadership. Could you explain this demand?

The only document that defines what Solidarnosc is and how it should function is its statutes. According to these statutes, the union leadership is made up of the National Congress of Delegates, the National Commission and the Control Commission. The tasks of the National Commission, the statutes indicate, are the following: to represent the union as a whole in dealings with the state, the economic administration, as well as with the other institutions and organisa-

tions, coordinating the activity of the regional union organisations and adopting the budget.

A demand for convoking the union's only statutory leadership should not surprise any member. It is the right and duty of every member to do this, and in particular a member of the National Commission. If anybody were to ask us to justify our demand they would only show their ignorance of the rules that govern our union.

Why did our demand make so many waves — even arouse hostility? The object of every rule is to curb individual and group interests in the name of the general interest. The statutes of Solidarnosc are such rules. They oppose individuals' actions contrary to the interests of the union as a whole. It seems that we have people in Solidarnosc who are opposed to respecting the statutes. I am with those who demand that the statutes be respected and applied. The present leadership of Solidarnosc is not a statutory body.

But after the establishment of the state of war, it was not possible to act in accordance with the statutes. In the place of the National Commission, replacement bodies were to appear. The Provisional Coordinating Commission (TKK) was the first.

I was very happy when the TKK emerged. I was in an internment camp at the time. The need for forming the TKK was clear to everyone, because then it was impossible to do otherwise. However, the situation has changed since.

When I got out of prison, I realised after a few months that there was absolutely no problem about convoking the National Commission. There were technical difficulties, to be sure, but they were far from being insurmountable. I have taken part in many meetings in which there were more than 200 unionists, and these meetings could be held. The National Commission has less than 100 members. Since then, conditions have become still more favourable.

If it is possible to apply the statutes, that should be done, if you want to stay in the framework of Solidarnosc. In such a situation, those who fail to apply the statutes place themselves outside the union Solidarnosc — not outside the social movement Solidarnosc, but outside the union. That seems clear to me. If a group makes it impossible to call a session of the statutory leadership of the union, then that group is standing in the way of the union functioning.

Why do you think this problem exists?

It is very simple. Monopoly conditions have appeared, and the group that has imposed this is doing everything it can to maintain it. The existence of groups aspiring to monopolise power is a natural thing. But democracy's purpose is precisely to make this impossible by establishing a balance between such groups and guaranteeing that they will keep a check over each other.

Nonetheless, the leading group in Solidarnosc contains members who

have various points of view. For example, some give priority to the fight for a market-type economic reform, while others favour giving priority to the trade union struggle in the plants, like the signatories to the letter of the 22, who consider that Solidarnosc is not paying enough attention to this question.

It is not paying any attention at all. Solidarnosc may be a social movement today, but it is certainly not a union. Since the establishment of the state of war, the groups that have taken the leadership have not been carrying out active trade union activity.

Henryk Wujec is an exception, because from time to time, timidly, he reminds people that after all we have to be a union.

I will give only one example: In the autumn of 1984 I met in Warsaw with a group of 40 workers from a plant, rank-and-file members of Solidarnosc. The workers sat quietly through the whole meeting; they said nothing. Only the leaders talked.

Shortly before midnight, the leaders left, and then the workers started talking, until 5am. I learned from them — not from the leaders — that new contracts were in the pipeline. When I came out of prison, none of the regional leaders talked to me about that. Either they did not know anything about it, or else they weren't interested. In that meeting, we discussed how to defend ourselves against this looming threat.

Later, I travelled through the country, and I collected documentation about this question. I drafted

1. This border was far to the west of Poland's pre-war western borders. The settlement granted lands to Poland that had been Polish centuries before in compensation for the eastern lands of inter-war Poland, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union.

2. According to the calculations made by Solidarnosc last October, to live on the "breadline" a person needs an income of 10,660 zlotys; and to live at a minimum social level, a family of four needs an income of 53,400 zlotys a month.

3. Helena Mikolajska is an actress and recipient of two state prizes for her artistic activity. She was formerly a very active member of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), which was victimised for the 1976 Radom strike and became the political nucleus of the Polish opposition.

Marvel comic hero

Edward Ellis reviews 'Robocop'.

Old Detroit is becoming a lawless hellhole. In its sordid backstreet slums, violent criminals are proving beyond the control of the police. The police, due to severe understaffing and a growing number of deaths, are threatening strike action.

Murphy is new in the district. He's a typical cop — brave, hard-working, with a nice kid at home and a beautiful wife. His partner, Lewis, is a hard-hitting tough-girl — also a typical cop.

Together they give chase to a band of vile cut-throat villains, but when back-up is not provided, fail to apprehend them, and Murphy is brutally murdered.

In decaying old Detroit, a dead cop is not allowed to rest in peace. Big business wants his corpse. Detroit's top company (which owns, among other things, the police force itself) is planning to build a new Detroit and their programme for reconstruction depends upon first eliminating crime. To this end, various silicon-based law enforcers are being developed, and after a quick knife-in-the-back at a board meeting, it is the Robocop project that gets the seal of approval.

So Murphy is resurrected — or almost. With new arms and legs, an apparently mechanised torso and a new computer brain, Robocop is created out of the mauled flesh of the dead policeman. He is the ultimate cop, able to deal with all criminals at lightning speed, with terrible efficiency. All he needs for survival is a mush, like babyfood, to regenerate what remains of the human being in him.

But there is a human being in there. Even without his old brain, the inner Murphy begins to stir. The essential Murphy still remains — and eventually it feels compelled to go in search of the gang who so brutally killed him.

And so 'Robocop' moves to its thrilling climax, as the cybernetic superman does battle with evil-doers, gradually finding that the source of the evil is a bit higher than street level.

And it is a thrilling climax. 'Robocop' is a skillful pastiche on innumerable themes. The star himself is a cross between Marvel comics' Iron Man (in appearance) and the Hulk (in the loss of his former identity) — and probably others, too (letters to SO, PO Box 823, SE15 4NA). The story is an old one — hero mutilated by evil powers takes his revenge.

It is about the misuse of technology by unscrupulous baddies, and about how nasty and inhuman the world is getting; in TV commercials, families play a new board game, 'Nukem', the climax of which is a mini-mushroom cloud that explodes over your table.

And it's very well done. Many reviewers have complained that it is too violent, but I can't say that I had to wince all that much, despite a somewhat unrevolutionary aversion to blood (although some bits were a bit yukky). Certainly it's general tone isn't much worse than your average cops and robbers yarn, gangster movie or Western. John Wayne used to finish off just as many baddies with one round of bullets as Robocop does.

Hardly the most profound indictment of modern-day America ever to hit our cinema screens; but not bad for a night out.



Your porn, my oppression!

In Lynn Ferguson's article 'My erotica, your porn' (Women's Eye, last week) there was a bit missing from the title. It should have been 'My erotica, your porn, my oppression'.

What I am concerned with getting to grips with is how women's bodies are used under capitalism and how that contributes to our oppression.

I sometimes find women's and men's bodies beautiful and erotic to look at — but women's bodies have become public property to be exploited for capitalist gain. I can't agree that page 3 girl pictures are 'silly and demeaning' because they stand for much more than that.

My feelings aren't 'distasteful because I find them tacky'. It is also news to me that women's sexuality is less genitally focused than men's.

What I thought the women's movement had been arguing is that relationships/friendships and sexuality are inextricably linked with our politics and when we started using the phrase 'the personal is political' it was an attempt to get recognition that the way we run our personal lives is not separated from our politics.

Something happened to me about a year ago that tested this theory painfully.

My next door neighbour started pinning pages from Playboy-type magazines on his front door with offensive things written over the woman's body. As I live in a council block that is run as a management co-op, I thought everyone would be outraged. I didn't take enough account of the liberalism that abounds.

I complained to the management committee but nothing happened. My arguments were that what he

stuck up in his flat was his business, but when I had to walk past the pictures each day it became an issue for us as a co-op.

Some people tore the pictures down, but he put up replacements with more provocative phrases on them. He was clearly enjoying it, people said.

I started to feel anxious when I came to my front door, and angry, too. Another woman with small children and I put a motion to a general meeting and my next door neighbour reacted by putting photocopied pictures with captions through the letter boxes of selected women in the block, including me.

The reaction of most women surprised me. I was told he was ill and we should give him support. He was just trying to get attention. At the meeting we felt isolated and one woman said there was something wrong with us. What was wrong with pictures of healthy women's

bodies?

He eventually stopped — but I still feel uneasy when I bump into him on the stairs.

True the pictures were of healthy women's bodies — so were they erotic or pornography?

Were we right to put pressure on him to take them down? That's banning, I suppose.

Page 3 girls are only a symptom of how women are viewed, but how can you tackle the root cause without dealing with the symptoms?

I'm not sure what Clare Short's Bill on banning Page 3 pictures says, but I do remember hearing a bit of 'Yesterday in Parliament' when she tried to get her Bill through last time. Every kind of reactionary sexist abuse was hurled at her by other male MPs and I expect Labour MPs like Austin Mitchell were joining in too. If nothing else it raises the issue to a level important enough to be discussed in Parliament.

It is where it's being discussed rather than the banning that I think is important.

There is a big campaign to oppose David Alton's bill limiting abortion rights — it is also a Private Members' Bill, and is about women's control of their bodies. What is missing with the Clare Short Bill is a campaign to put the arguments and convince large numbers of women and men that this is an issue they should be supporting or opposing.

I personally felt it was a victory when the NUM stopped having pin-ups in 'The Miner'.

The article had me reaching for my Simone de Beauvoir and Sheila Rowbotham books. Simone de Beauvoir said in 'The Second Sex':

"The condition under which women's sexual life unfolds depends upon her social and economic situation as a whole. The erotic experience is one that most poignantly discloses to human beings the ambiguity of their condition — in it they are aware of themselves as flesh and as spirit, as the other and as subject. This conflict has a more dramatic shape for woman because at first she feels herself to be object and does not at once realise a sure independence in sex enjoyment, she must regain her dignity while assuming her carnal condition — an enterprise fraught with difficulty and danger and one that often fails."

"Just wanting a nice screw" isn't as simple a desire as it seems.

Why Tories back Alton

Why do most Tories back David Alton's anti-abortion Bill?

The only valid reason against abortion is the sanctity of human life, even before birth, but the Tory party is motivated solely by the desire for profit. Nothing else matters to them.

On the scales of Tory thinking, the lives of children, babies and the unborn child weigh nothing compared to profit.

The Tories have imposed massive

cuts in the NHS, knowing the consequences of these cuts will be not only misery, suffering, and prolonged intense pain for the thousands on hospital waiting lists, but also the unnecessary and preventable deaths of hundreds of people, including many children and babies.

The death of six-week-old David Barber after his vital heart operation was postponed five times was a direct consequence of cuts in the NHS.

The death of Amy O'Sullivan shortly after birth, of little one-day-old Chintu Kumar, and of baby Alexander Davies after only two days alive, were all a direct consequence of cuts in the NHS.

The death toll among children and babies is horrendous.

Thatcher and every Tory MP is personally responsible for everyone of these deaths. Margaret Thatcher is as responsible for the death of David Barber as surely as if she had strangled him with her own hands.

And such politicians then have the effrontery and hypocrisy to oppose abortion on the pretence of being concerned about the sanctity of life of the unborn child.

They say abortion is murder. If it is murder to terminate the life of a child while still in the womb, is it not also murder to deny that child the medical facilities necessary to live once he or she has developed beyond the womb?

If you are against abortion you must totally oppose every cut in the NHS. To do otherwise is to be guilty of the most despicable hypocrisy and double standards.

If you believe in the sanctity of human life you must fight every cut, every closure, and the Tories' starving the NHS of funds.

A. NIGGLE
Manchester

PETE GILMAN
North London

PENNY NEWELL
South London

Ken is a hero

How dare Socialist Organiser (no. 343) malign the name of Ken Livingstone? SO seems obsessed with desecrating the reputation of class struggle hero Ken.

You accuse Ken — or Bro. Ken as his trade union colleagues call him — of 'careerism'. What's wrong with believing in careers? We all want more jobs — or perhaps SO has come full circle in its frenzy of reaction and now supports unemployment? The fact is, careers are at the heart of the anti-

imperialist struggle. Giddy on the poisonous elixir of pro-imperialism and pro-Zionism, all your talk of fighting the Tories is beyond our Ken.

What is Kenny's crime exactly? How did he rise from obscurity to GLC leader, then to Labour MP, Third Duke of Brent? Did he use contacts in big business? Did he use a public school background as a springboard? Did he lick his way up through the echelons of Whitehall? Did he use any of these means? Of course he didn't — he used the labour movement.



The future for Ford workers?

"We're Brits, not Nips" said the Ford workers' banner at Dagenham. But work practices in Japan were imposed against fierce resistance by Japanese workers. Mark Davids looks at the Japanese car industry.

Car industry bosses have a very clear image of the future: it's called Japan. Workers almost like robots, eager to please the company; company unions that never strike — that at least is the image of Japanese labour relations. Nissan already have a no-strike-deal union at their plant in the north-east of England.

In 1983, British Leyland was producing less than 750,000 vehicles a year. Toyota was producing 3.2 million. And this difference was achieved almost entirely by the speed at which Japanese workers were forced to work.

Japanese car workers at work are reputed to be an astonishing sight — moving incredibly quickly and dextrously, without pausing. Carrots as well as sticks are used to keep workers up to this exhausting pace. "Guaranteed employment", company housing, loans, sports and cultural facilities are provided. But the image of Japan as a paradise for workers providing they are not militant is completely false.

In fact, employment is not "guaranteed" at all. Faced with world recession in the 1970s, Japanese employers reacted like any other — and kicked hundreds of thousands of workers out of jobs.

Moreover, a big part of the Japanese labour force are *contract* workers — who have no job security at all.

Even if companies don't sack workers, they have other techniques to get rid of them — such as 'len-

ding workers to other companies. For example, in 1975, 8,000 regular employees of Masda were loaned to Masda dealers for three years. Nippon Steel transferred hundreds of steel workers to the Isuzu Motor Company for three months as temporary workers.

Between 1974 and 1981, Masda reduced its workforce by 25% — while production went up by 60%!

Even more effective as a way of pacifying workers is the loaning of money by the company. A loan from a big company to buy a house is required to be repaid when the worker retires at 55. And this, of course, ties the worker to the company for the rest of his (and in the Japanese car industry it will be his) life. The threat of dismissal, in these circumstances, is terrifying.

Wages in Japan rise with length of service. So being sacked or leaving the job has the effect of returning the worker to the bottom of the ladder.

Worse, wages are accorded by a merit system. In some cases, 50% of the workers' wage is determined in this way.

A key person for assessing the 'merit' of a worker is the foreman — so clearly it will be important for the worker to maintain a good relationship in order not to lose pay. So 'company loyalty' becomes the biggest single factor in assessment. Workers voluntarily give up their holidays, for example — not because they love the work, but because otherwise they could lose 'merit' pay or be sacked.

'Small group activity' or 'QC circles' are out-of-hours (and in effect compulsory) meetings of workers to discuss productivity, quality and efficiency. 91% of big companies with 10,000 or more workers had QC circles in 1976. Their effect is to make workers think on behalf of management, and to divide workers by breeding competition for productivity levels.

Each day in the factory at Toyota City, for example, begins with exercises to music, and then a 'tool box' meeting, where a foreman gives a lecture on productivity levels for the day. The whole set-up is designed to make workers production-machines.

This situation did not come about because Japanese workers are naturally 'like that'. The whole system was built on a massive defeat for the Japanese working class in the years after World War 2.

Japan had been defeated, and society was in a state of near collapse; American troops had occupied the country. But the labour movement grew rapidly. By 1948, 50% of workers were organised. In 1947 a general strike was brutally repressed by General McArthur, but class struggle continued. In the early 1950s, huge battles in industry were coupled with political struggles against the Korean War.

But the workers were defeated. The independent unions were all but smashed. Safe, 'yellow' unions, controlled, in effect, by the companies, were created.

Today there are militants in Japanese industry (although the independent union federation, Sohyo, is best organised in the public sector). But they face a very difficult situation.

Those militants are fighting against the 'Japanese work practices' that have achieved such notoriety, and deserve our support. At the factory in Osaka, Japan's second city, an occupation against closure lasted five years, starting in 1978. There is that tradition in Japan as well.

Workers in Britain need to support all attempts to build real unions and link up with them. In today's increasingly international car industry, international links between workers are essential to win workers' demands.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

SUBSCRIBE!

Get Socialist Organiser delivered to your door by post. Rates(UK) £8.50 for six months, £16 for a year.

Name

Address

Please send me 6/12 months sub. I enclose £... To: Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Get your copy!





Les Hearn's
SCIENCE COLUMN

USSR goes green

Russian industry has polluted the land for decades without hindrance by public scrutiny and criticism. Now *glasnost* is allowing criticism to emerge from the shadows and, like the example of women workers' health given last week, to enter the pages of official publications.

An article in 'Advances of Science and Technology', a digest published in English by Novosti Press Agency and hence for foreign consumption, discussed the USSR's ecological situation at the end of last year.

The author, journalist Ivetta Useinova, lists several industrial decisions taken recently on ecological grounds. These include:

*A decision by many district soviets to ban aerial spraying of pesticides.

*The abandonment of a plan to re-route two north-running Siberia rivers so that their water could be made available to southern agricultural regions. One version of the plan involved nuclear explosions to divert the rivers. The project had caused alarm inside and outside Russia and Useinova refers to a "nationwide discussion" having led to the cancellations.

*The conversion of a pulp and paper mill on Lake Baikal to ecologically safe production and the halting of the building of a fertiliser factory on the lake. Lake Baikal is a unique eco-system, the largest fresh water lake in the world and home to many unique species, including fresh-water seals. However, it has been polluted by the outpourings of the mill and other factories for at least twenty years.

*The similar conversion of pulp mills on Lake Ladoga, near Leningrad.

*The planned conversion of the Tula nitrogen industry from making ammonia to making microchips and instruments. Hitherto it had been polluting the forests and orchards of the Leo Tolstoy Memorial Estate at Yasnaya Polyana.

Useinova spoke to Yuri Izrael, chair of the USSR State Committee on Hydrometeorology and Control of the Natural Environment, who admitted that the situation was serious. There then follows a long list of improvements that have been made (the article is for foreign consumption, after all). Air pollution is said to have been cut by 15% in ten years. In some cities, it is said to have been "checked and sometimes reduced". There is a "slow but sure" diminution of harmful discharges into the atmosphere. "Many" bodies of water have been made ecologically safe.

This impressive list of achievements only serves to draw attention to how bad things were before. I'll go into that next week.

After Alton

A conference on Women's Liberation and Socialism into the 1990s.

Discussions include:

- How can we build a strong, campaigning working-class women's movement?
- Fighting cuts in the NHS and in local government
- Defending abortion rights
- Building Labour Party women's sections
- Women in trade unions.

Contact: Lynn Ferguson, c/o 12A Canonbury Street, London N1 2TD.



Art students occupy National Gallery in protest about cuts. The DL leadership of NOLS and NUS has failed to build such campaigns.

Labour must clean up NOLS!

By Sandra Carlidge
(member, NOLS National Committee, in personal capacity)

THE STUDENT Council of the National Organisation of Labour Students, on 6-7 February, failed to give any answers to the serious organisational and political questions about the democracy of NOLS in general and about the selection of NOLS candidates for National Union of Students elections especially.

Most of the carving-out of opposition delegates was done before the actual event, but enough was done on the day to create a substantial lobby of very pissed-off delegates. These delegates left the selection meeting when, after only five minutes of questions to the Labour Party Student Organiser and the NOLS National Committee about grievances, the dominant Democratic Left faction used its arranged majority to proceed to next business.

The following college Labour clubs had had their delegates barred, or walked out in disgust:

Newcastle Poly
York University
Leeds University
Sheffield University
Bradford University
Nottingham University
Nottingham Poly
Liverpool University
Stoke Poly
Warwick University
Reading University
Cambridge University
Bristol Poly
Essex University
Institute of Education
University College London
School of Slavonic and East European Studies
Brighton Poly
Ealing College.

No-one apart from the conference organisers has any way of knowing who voted in the selection of candidates. Minority groups were not allowed to observe registration. There was no routine check of NOLS or Labour Party cards (only of certain individuals who, for example, had ticked their NOLS card on the wrong line). There was no check of proof of status as a Student Union Executive member, although people were ruled out for not producing this last year.

On the other hand, NUS Area Convenors who are associate members of Higher Education Student Unions, and thus (unconstitutionally) members of NOLS, were

given a vote, and at least one college which has never had a Labour Club but used to have a DL supporter was sent a set of registration forms.

There are wider questions of democracy than just last weekend's carving-out. The fact is that joining NOLS these days is by invitation only, and, if you're not welcome, staying in is a real battle.

New college Labour Clubs are not inaugurated unless they are DL proteges, and the DL has consistently refused to organise NOLS in the Further Education sector. Many working-class students are taking part-time course in the FE sector. These part-timers are barred by NOLS's constitution from joining it — although part-time postgraduates can join NOLS!

Then there is the whole issue of who can vote at a Student Council. Last year's 11th-hour rescue of the DL's majority by ruling out Area Executive members has now been institutionalised. A second rule change was the requirement that all delegates to Student Council be

Labour Party members.

The DL allege that I complained about this in the National Committee, but it's not true! All NOLS members should also be Labour Party members. But the fact is that they're not. The DL knew about this rule change months ago, and told everyone else five weeks ago. This suggests that their motives were less than honest. They wanted to exclude those NOLS members who are not privy to the DL's internal mailings and telephone trees.

The DL's 'reasoning' was that Student Council is the only NOLS event where delegates didn't have to be Party members, and they wished to remove the anomaly. The fact that this is the only NOLS event where delegates don't have to be elected by Labour students strikes me as a much bigger anomaly. NOLS chose not to deal with this.

In surmising why, it is worth considering that of the 94 votes finally cast for the DL slate, some 60-odd were accounted for by members of the NUS National Executive, NUS

Scotland and UCMC (NUS Wales) executives, NOLS NC, Scottish Organisation of Labour Students and Welsh Organisation of Labour Students executives, Area Convenors, and Student Union Executives. There were probably fewer than 30 Labour Club delegates who voted for the DL.

The DL do not think that their dwindling support inside NOLS should be a reason for allowing the real majority to take over. Nor do they feel inclined to step aside because of their abject political failures.

They have failed to win students to Labour — NOLS membership is around two thirds of what it was six years ago. They have failed to organise the biggest potential area for Labour's growth among youth, the Further Education sector.

They failed to turn out the Labour vote for the General Election — most student marginals went to the Tories. They have failed to use their control of the NUS to fight the Tories or to build an anti-Tory movement with workers and communities in struggle.

But the DL hang on, threatening anyone who steps out of line with the wrath of the Labour Party NEC.

As the only youth organisation in any way palatable to Neil Kinnock, the DL has been promised the caretakership of the new Labour youth section set out in the Sawyer proposals. Anyone with any experience of NOLS will be sceptical of the future of such an arrangement.

The DL seem confident, though, that their allotted task gives them carte blanche to do whatever has to be done inside NOLS to keep control.

A new threat

THE LATEST response from the 'Democratic Left' faction to the threat from left-wingers inside the National Organisation of Labour Students is a letter which they have evidently persuaded Labour general secretary Larry Whitty to write to all Constituency Labour Parties and Labour Clubs.

The letter says that NOLS is the official student wing of the Party and that students involved in 'Further Education Labour Students' (the Militant organisation in the FE sector) or Socialist Students in NOLS risk 'appropriate action'.

But NOLS is not the Labour Party's student section. It is an *affiliated society*, like the Fabians or the Co-op, over which the NEC has no direct jurisdiction.

Labour Party members of many different shades have stood against NOLS for NUS elections for years. (Under NUS's STV voting system, there is no risk of such competition handing a position to a non-Labour candidate). Any moral right NOLS had to be the voice of all Labour's students has been lost by its behaviour and its failures.

The only way to stop harmful dissent inside NOLS is to give Labour students democracy and an organisation which helps and politically leads student activists, rather than one which is at best irrelevant and at worst a deliberate hindrance to students organising against the Tories.

Of course, it could be that the

National Executive does not care about the political record of the DL, preferring NOLS to be an obedient rump rather than active and vibrant — and potentially politically unruly. But even those who think that way cannot condone the can of worms which NOLS has become.

Labour Party members who are serious about winning students for Labour don't want this. We want democracy, and we want a campaigning NOLS. To get this, we need an official investigation into the way NOLS is being run.

Tribune weighs in

The once-left Labour weekly Tribune contributed its bit to the attempt to cover up the scandal of the way the National Organisation of Labour Students is being run with a nasty little piece in its diary column last week.

According to this piece, dissatisfaction with the ruling 'Democratic Left' faction is a creation of Socialist Students in NOLS, which in turn is a "front" for Socialist Organiser, and SO in its turn is a "front" for the long-dead "International Communist League"!

It's all to do with Jewish conspiracies, too. The Union of Jewish Students, for no reason that Tribune can understand, prefers SSIN to the 'Democratic Left' faction.

You can see why Tribune can't understand Jewish students' dissatisfaction with the DL when it comments, "Given the current level of Israel's popularity...backing from the UJS is about as useful as a Porsche on Mount

Everest". Imagine what even the DL would say if someone suggested that because of the ill fame of General Zia's government Pakistani students should be shunned.

ADVERTISEMENT

'A Stitch in Time'

Pamphlet from SSIN on corruption in NOLS, now being reprinted with updating and new information. Available from 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15, for 75p plus 20p postage.

Ferry bosses want blood



Nearly 3,000 seafarers are still on strike despite bosses' threats of High Court action and instructions by the National Executive of the National Union of Seamen to go back to work.

Despite a frantic tour of the country's ports by NUS leaders, Holyhead, Harwich, Fleetwood and Belfast remain affected by the strike, as do P&O ferries operating

out of Dover.

The strike began in solidarity with 161 union members victimised and sacked by the Isle of Man Steam and Packet Company and has been made solid by general anxiety among union members about the future of the industry. Ferry companies plan savage cuts in jobs and attacks on working conditions.

P&O and Sealink have applied for seizure of the union's assets. NUS leader Sam McCluskie has ex-

posed himself to the High Court, claiming that the union 'never intended to act unlawfully'.

But feelings of militancy are running high. Belfast seafarers, enraged at the line taken by the NUS executive have threatened to leave the union unless McCluskie resigns.

In Harwich where British-flagged ships have been cut from nine to one in the past eight years, union members feel that only militant action can save their jobs. One union

member commented:

"They can put McCluskie in prison, they can seize all our assets, but this ship won't sail."

The bosses want blood. The sacked workers on the Isle of Man voted in a secret ballot to reject management plans. They were sacked anyway.

Only a militant battle can secure the jobs of the seafarers and stave off the increasing dictatorial and cuts-hungry bosses.

Councils

Anger against cuts spreads

By Nik Barstow, chair Islington JTUC, in a personal capacity.

Council workers' anger over

cuts is spreading as widely as the anger in the NHS.

Last week Camden NALGO was on the verge of an all-out strike against job cuts. The Labour Council had sent a letter to its workforce giving everyone until 10 February to sign new contracts or "the council

will have no option but to issue a notice terminating your contract ...and offering you re-engagement on a new contract of employment."

This threatening letter was designed to push through Camden's plans for 're-deployment' to carry out cuts. At the last minute the council withdrew the letter — but unless negotiations get somewhere, a major strike is still likely.

In neighbouring Islington the NALGO branch held a one-day strike on 4 February — again protesting at cuts and plans to issue redundancy notices. Over 2,000 NALGO members took strike action, and 500 workers joined a joint union lobby of the Council's Policy Committee meeting that evening.

Islington Council, like Camden,

is still not sure about how to handle re-deployments and redundancies. They shelved plans to issue redundancy notices on the 4th, putting them back to the Council meeting on 23 February.

Both councils are trying to buy time because they fear the effects of pushing cuts plans through.

Now more than ever council workers need to link up to make the anti-cuts fight a joint one. The Day of Action called for 8 March by the London Bridge joint stewards' committee, supported by all the major unions in ILEA, by ten NALGO branches around London and by other unions can become a major demonstration both to the Tories and Labour councils that we won't accept these cuts.

CPSA

Sheffield YTS strike

By Ray Ferris

23 CPSA members are still on indefinite strike, since 14 January, over the imposition of a YTS trainee into the Community Programme department of the Manpower Services Commission head office in Sheffield.

Last Friday morning, 5th, several strikers addressed a meeting of Camden strikers in London and gave them a cheque for £357. In the afternoon they met members of their Section Executive Committee, run by Broad Left '84 and their Militant-dominated NEC Liaison Committee on YTS.

The NEC members agreed in principle to their demands to link up campaigns throughout the service on staffing, pay and YTS and to escalate the action.

The government aims to cut the Civil Service to a core of around 20,000 policy makers, leaving over half a million civil servants hived off to private management boards.

The NEC members promised to recommend to the full NEC that these issues be central to the union pay rallies at the end of this month.

It remains to be seen if they will genuinely depart from their previous strategy of selective and isolated lightning action which dissipates members' militancy.

MSC management in Sheffield have banned CPSA meetings about YTS from their premises or during work time. A petition is being circulated

publicising the strike's demands and a meeting has been called in a nearby hall at which management have been challenged to a public debate over YTS.

This week strikers and NEC members addressed meetings in Department of Employment branches, UBOs, Job Centres, Restart Offices, etc., calling for strike action beginning on Wednesday and lasting at least a week. A rally was held on Wednesday outside the MSC Head Office.

Branches within the Department of Employment must put pressure on their Broad Left '84 leaders to link up the Camden and Sheffield disputes. The Broad Left dominated NEC must be forced to put their words into action.

And in Sheffield the dispute must be spread into the heart of MSC operations at its head office.

Messages of support: CPSA Strike Headquarters, SCCAU, 73 West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.

Buses

South East strike solid

By A.J. Cole

TGWU bus drivers in Hertfordshire, Essex and North-East London are on indefinite strike against the imposition of new pay and conditions. The strike

has been solid.

But, with small exceptions, other companies are operating normally through the area, and in some cases have taken over entire routes. The union has asked workers in other companies to take the work, to increase the financial pressure on the local company, London Country North-East.

This identification of the boss as enemy, not a partner, is a welcome break from the company unionism that has dominated the bus industry for so long. It is mistaken, however, in its implicit acceptance of the notion of competition between capitalists. The bosses in this, as in any other industry, organise together for their mutual benefit.

Bus companies are attacking the conditions and pay of their workers. They have a coordinated approach. We need an answer. The answer is sympathy action.

The clear message to our class enemies and their agents, the government, must be not that we will screw this particular nasty little capitalist, but that we will not allow any buses to run until you pay us the rate and give us the conditions we require.

The workforce at London Country North-East have been put on notice. They are to be dismissed next Wednesday if they do not return to work. London Buses has already been around the garages, literally recruiting new bus drivers off the picket line. Meanwhile, the same London Buses has been forcing through similar measures against its own workforce around London.

Whether the London Country North-East management stay in business locally as a particularly foul example of a generally unpleasant type, is not our main concern. The defence of wages and working practices, the defence of services and safety for the travelling public, must take precedence.

Post Office

Build the rank and file

By Pete Keenlyside

As expected, the leaders of the postworkers' union, UCW, have managed to get a majority in favour of their sell-out deal on the shorter working week. But it was nothing like the majority they must have been expecting.

Out of 166,000 ballot papers issued, 108,000 were returned, with 62,778 voting in favour (57%) and 46,523 (43%) against.

The numbers of those voting 'no' is encouragingly high. Despite only 53% being in favour of strike action in the first place, despite the fact that Christmas had come and gone, and despite the complete absence of any campaign for rejection, over 46,000 were still prepared to take the issue further. Had the deal been put to a special conference, as it was supposed to have been, or even to a branch ballot, it would have been rejected.

46,000 have shown that they want something different. We now need to build the sort of active rank-and-file organisation that can involve them in getting it.

Teachers

London teachers strike

Almost all Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) schools were shut down on Tuesday 9th, by a one-day official strike of the National Union of Teachers. 80% of the Inner London Teachers' Association's 13,000 members had voted to come out on Tuesday and take further,

unspecified industrial action.

Over 2,000 striking teachers, pupils and education workers marched through London. The strike and demonstration were against the government's imposed £140 million cut in the Labour-controlled ILEA's budget, which the Labour Group has said it will implement. 9,000 jobs are threatened, including 2,500 teaching jobs.

The government now intends to abolish ILEA altogether. The Tories' original plan was to allow London boroughs to opt out of ILEA, and thus kill it bit by bit.

ILEA Labour leaders say they will fight abolition, but how? ILEA leader Neil Fletcher sent a letter to the NUT urging them to call off Tuesday's strike because it would divert attention from abolition!

On Thursday, 11 February, a joint school reps and shop stewards' conference has been organised by the ILEA trade unions to discuss a programme of action to defend all education jobs and the service itself. Already there have been a number of calls for all-out action on 8 March, the date of the last scheduled ILEA meeting that could change its budget strategy to one of defending the education service in London.

tion of the night club and are supervised. A person from Stoke Disabilities Forum who came with us later on the Ritz's picket described this guideline as a form of petty apartheid.

At our union's weekly campaigns' committee we decided that we would picket and leaflet Ritz's, asking people to boycott it. Our action proved to be a great success. We turned away about 50 people, including a group of miners who said they would never cross a picket line and promptly departed in the direction of the nearest pub.

Local press and radio turned up to cover the event and demand a statement from the night club's manager.

The next day the union received a 'phone call from one of the local newspapers informing us that Mecca had lifted the restrictions on disabled people.

On Friday 5 February we got another call from Mecca. They said it had always been their policy to allow disabled people unconditional entry and that the previous spokesperson had mysteriously resigned.

Blind student's victory

By Deb Strawbridge

On Monday 25 January — student night at Ritz's in Newcastle-under-Lyme — a blind student and his guide-dog were turned away. The management's excuse was that no dogs are allowed.

Yet this student goes to other night clubs in Stoke-on-Trent along with his dog.

The case was brought to the attention of North Staffs Poly students' union. We rang Ritz's demanding an explanation but they put the phone down on us. We contacted the press and radio, condemning the night club's action, and rang up Mecca Leisure, who own the club.

A spokesperson for Mecca said that "these types of people" have to ring up the night club in advance, warning them of their intended visit. They are only allowed in on quiet nights and when they arrive they are ushered into a certain sec-

Back the nurses

I was fairly pleased with the outcome of the NUM special delegate conference last Tuesday, 2nd, mainly because they threw out the Executive recommendation to sit down with the UDM. The rank and file are obviously more in touch with the situation in Notts than many in the leadership.

I was sorry that the conference voted against escalating the overtime ban in favour of another ballot on the issue, but I can understand the reason behind that. Given the attitude of the leadership, who imposed the weakest possible overtime ban in the first place, men have become demoralised and sick and tired of hearing about such bans.

Responsibility

I think the issue behind the overtime ban should have been pressed more. It is about the new discipline code, and men having to live under the fear of the sack every single day.

The UDM have completely exposed themselves. Their origin was in scabbing against us in 1984/5. At the general election last year they scabbed on the Labour Party, when their leaders told people not to vote Labour. Now they are talking of scabbing on the deputies, and training their own members to do the safety cover that is NACODS work.

Obviously we have our differences with NACODS and always will have — the deputies, after all, are front-line management. But they are still trade unionists and that determines our attitude. We would not contemplate crossing any picket lines or working under any non-NACODS people, whether they are UDM-trained or BACM (colliery managers).

The UDM attitude shows they are not, and never have been, trade unionists. We said that right from the very beginning of the breakaway. They are there to do the bidding of management.

NACODS are due to escalate their action and refuse to work the new rosters the management is trying to impose on them. I am sure this escalation of action in the pits will work in our favour rather than the UDM's.

Overtime

British Coal, of course, want to sow division, which is why they are breaking NACODS's closed shop on safety inspections and encouraging the UDM. But they are pushing NACODS to fight, and that will help build bridges between them and the NUM. We cannot live forever looking back over our shoulders at the role NACODS played in the 1984/5 strike, and I hope the bridges will be built at national, area and rank-and-file level.

The nurses have made tremendous advances, breaking the mould and coming out on strike. People have joined them on picket lines. It is a great step forward, and I hope they build up to the kind of pressure that can severely shake this government.

It is also a message to the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC. They should stop being mealy-mouthed. They should recognise that the hospital workers are not just battling about their own wages. They are battling for the welfare state and the NHS. All other workers should come out and stand alongside the nurses and ancillary workers.

If the TUC or Labour Party were to say: The health service needs to be saved, and we call on all other workers to take action in solidarity with health workers, who are restricted in what they can do by the need to maintain emergency cover, they would get a tremendous response. People are already starting to lift their heads up — Ford's, the seafarers, the disputes in the pits. We can fight and we can win.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Labour must demand truth on death squads

On Monday 8th, John Stalker, former Deputy Chief constable of Greater Manchester, published a book about his attempts to investigate the 'shoot to kill' policy of the RUC's notorious Special Branch in Northern Ireland.

In 1982, six unarmed people were gunned down by this unit. some were IRA supporters or sympathisers; one was a 17-year old boy uninterested in politics.

Stalker found himself frustrated time and again in his efforts to get to the truth. He concluded that the RUC Special Branch was "a police force out of control" with the mentality and trappings of "a Central American assassination squad".

Worse, senior police officers in the RUC were trying to cover up. All the evidence seems to point to a 'covert operations' policy which was — if not inspired — then certainly tolerated and sanctioned at the highest levels. In 1979, according to the Irish Times, Margaret Thatcher paid a visit to a similar unit and warmly commended them on the job they were doing.

The cover-up may go right to the top — Chief Constable Sir John Herman.

In his first meeting with Chief Constable Herman, Stalker was handed a torn cigarette packet with his mother's family tree written on it. Stalker's mother was Catholic, his father Protestant. Herman remarked: 'Remember, Mr Stalker, you are in a jungle now'.

At all levels attempts have been made to silence the truth. The government was directly involved. In 1986 Stalker's enquiry became too much of an embarrassment. He found himself recalled to Manchester to face a number of trumped up disciplinary charges which ranged from the petty to the bizarre. Stalker reckons that the decision to do this must have been taken at Cabinet level.

Now Stalker is no radical crusader. He served as Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester under the notorious right wing bigot James 'Christian' Anderton. He was obviously chosen for the inquiry because those who chose him reckoned that he would 'understand' the RUC. He stands to make a tidy sum from his book.

The American publishers of 'Spycatcher' have already expressed an interest in the rights to the book.

But he has blown the whistle on the increasingly unbridled paramilitary violence of the RUC and the role it plays in the repression of people in Northern Ireland. It also sheds some light on the lengths to which the ruling class will go to suppress those who challenge their interests.

Everything that the RUC have done could happen here. The state is quite prepared to use its armed wing — the police and the army — to stamp out threats to its authority. The class which operates and controls that state will pay lip service to 'justice' and 'democracy' only as long as it suits them.

We need a full labour movement inquiry into the RUC, the Special Branch, MI5, MI6 — all the flails of the bourgeois state.

The John Stalker case is not about an isolated aberration when a gang of thugs 'went too far' — it is part and parcel of the way the modern capitalist state works.



Strikers at Halewood: Photo: Paul Herman, Profile

Ford workers can win!

By John Bloxam

AS WE go to press on Tuesday 9th, the strike by 32,500 British Ford workers is 100% solid.

Even the tiny Woolwich components plants, scheduled for closure this summer, reversed its previous decision and voted to join the stoppage.

Already 2,500 workers at Ford's Genk factory in Belgium have been laid off, and production of Escorts and Orions at Saarlouis, West Germany, has been halved.

The rapid impact of the strike comes from developments in company over the last ten years. Investment has been concentrated in the highly profitable British plants.

Stocks are kept to a minimum. Production of each part of a car is concentrated in the most profitable place. The British Dagenham and Bridgend plants control the supply of engines.

However, it is still important that British workers maintain contact with their fellow-workers in Europe. A union official at Genk was already complaining on Tuesday morning that he had heard nothing from the British unions.

White-collar workers in British Ford plants could also be joining the dispute. They are due to meet the company on Wednesday 10th over a pay and conditions package similar to the one rejected by the manual workers. By fighting alongside the manual workers they can strengthen

both groups.

A week ago the Ford bosses must have thought they were home and dry with their radical new package. They had offered pay increases marginally above inflation in return for a three-year deal and the introduction of 'quality circles', 'team leaders', and the right to shift skilled workers onto the line. The union negotiators agreed to recommend acceptance. But 60 per cent voted against the deal in a ballot.

The bosses refused to change their offer, and the union leaders were forced to call a national strike from Sunday night, 7th. Workers at both Dagenham and Halewood had already walked out.

TGWU negotiator Mick Murphy explained cynically: "By balloting the membership as obliged by the legislation, we have got a situation which gives us no option but to take strike action from Monday. This is a tragedy we have sought to avoid from day one..." Before the Tories' union ballot laws came in, he explained, he could have sold the workers out and ruled the package accepted because 11 (small) plants voted for it and only 10 against!

Battle

Such people are not fit to lead a major battle with one of the mightiest multinationals in the world. For the dispute Ford workers should:

- organise a national strike committee, linking strike committees from the different plants,
- hold regular mass meetings at the

plants, to keep the membership informed and involved.

- insist that any settlement is first discussed at mass meetings before a vote is taken.

As early as September last year the union's own claim was effectively forgotten. It demanded a one-year deal, a 10 per cent wage rise, and a shorter working week. Ford workers are now in a position to win these three demands, and they should become the demands of the strike.

Victory to the Ford workers!

Our fighting fund

So far we have £4056.09 towards our fund target of £10,000 by 31 March.

Most of this has come in contributions from regular supporters, but other efforts planned include a jumble sale in North London on 27 February.

Let us know what's planned in your area, and send contributions to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

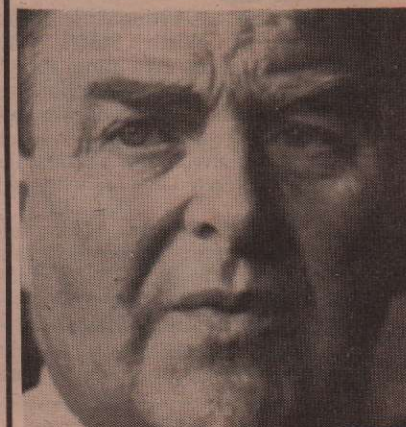
Palestine: two nations, two states!

The new issue of 'Workers' Liberty', out now, discusses the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and carries, for the first time in English, two articles by Trotsky on the socialist approach to disputes between nations.

Also in this issue: a feature on the Crash, Kowalewski on Poland, and debate on Ireland, Scottish nationalism, South Africa and the movies. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



Israel and the Palestinians



John Herman