

STRIKE FOR YOUR HEALTH SERVICE

**Give
us
one
day's
pay**

MILITANT NEEDS immediately to produce tens of thousands of leaflets, posters, broadsheets and placards explaining the need for a one day general strike to defend the health service. Never before has our paper had such a role to play in spreading the central demand around which workers can organise.

We are appealing to every reader to donate straight away at least **ONE DAY'S PAY**. Already the nurses have lost a day's pay in defence of the health service. We are asking all supporters to do the same for *Militant* so that we can produce the material needed.

Continued on page 7.

THE HEALTH union Cohse has called a day of action for the NHS on 14 March. Dave Nellist MP has raised in Parliament that this should be made into a one day general strike.

By a Hackney council worker

This would get a massive response. Millions of trade unionists have been just waiting for the call to take action alongside the health workers.

In Hackney, members of my union, Nalgo, came out with the health workers on 3 February. We held a 1,000 strong march from the Town Hall to St Bartholomews hospital.

Despite the rain, the chanting and cheering never let up.

Many manual workers left work to join the march and the Manual Joint Works committee voted to support it.

In West London bus workers came out. Frickley miners also struck. Now the NUM at Monktonhall in Scotland have written to health workers demanding their pit is picketed next time the nurses strike.

Liverpool health workers are taking action on 10 February. Council workers in GMBATU branch 5 voted to strike with them. Workers at Lucas Aerospace and at Vauxhall also voted to strike.

In London even middle class commuters snapped up leaflets from striking nurses. In a Gallup

John Macreadie says:

IN MY opinion the whole labour movement should unite behind Cohse's call. Any weakness or confusion on that day would be seized upon by Lawson to justify keeping the NHS on pitifully inadequate rations. The lead must come from the top.

When he rises to make his budget speech it should be against the backcloth of an almighty show of strength the day before.

I have made the call for a one day general strike in support of the NHS. I have been overwhelmed by the response this call has received from workers everywhere.

The TUC should back the day of action with a clear, unambiguous call for a one day general strike on 14 March.

poll, 79 per cent supported the nurses' strikes, including 66 per cent of Tory voters! Yet only a fortnight ago Nupe leader, Tom Sawyer, was saying strikes and picket lines give the "wrong image".

Thatcher and her cabinet are completely isolated. On the issue of health alone, Thatcherism could be completely undermined, if the Labour and union leaders were as determined as the nurses.

24 hour strike

Every health worker must rally behind Cohse's call and strike, with the necessary emergency cover, on 14 March. The whole labour movement should back the health workers in action with a 24 hour general strike on that day.

Trade unionists meeting at the BLOC conference must step up pressure on the TUC to call workers out on the fourteenth and mobilise for BLOC's lobby of the TUC general council on 24

February.

But they must be ready to organise the protest strike themselves if the TUC leaders refuse. They should invite health workers to address mass meetings to prepare their workforce to come out on 14 March.

Local NHS broad lefts, local action committees of health workers and other workers, or trades councils could coordinate mass rank and file action.

A 24 hour general strike would be a warning shot to the Tories. If they leave the NHS on the critical list, even more widespread action will be taken.

A national strike against the Tories could be the start of a campaign of action to drive them from office and replace them with a socialist Labour government prepared to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy.

With the wealth of the nation in its hands, it could allocate the necessary resources to the NHS to guarantee proper health care for all.



Militant

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One-day general strike on 14 March

FOUR WEEKS ago, immediately after the victory of the Manchester nurses, *Militant* raised the demand for a 24 hour general strike to defend the NHS. Since then it has been taken up by the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) and is receiving an enthusiastic response wherever it is put forward.

Thousands are signing BLOC petitions; union branches and Labour parties are declaring their support. The BLOC conference is likely to endorse the demand. Rarely can a slogan have been better timed or more exactly suited to the developing mood of union activists. Workers were looking for national action by the whole labour movement around the time of the budget, to shame the Tories into providing extra resources for health care, rather than more tax cuts for the rich.

Now the health union Cohse is calling a 'day of protest' for 14 March, the day before the budget, and is inviting other unions to join in. It is not clear how far Cohse leaders intend their 'protest' to go but the feelings of their rank and file will be to take strike action.

All Cohse activists must press for effective action to be taken at their own place of work on the day. Other health workers must also prepare to come out on that day, and demand their national leaders call for action with Cohse.

The 24 hour strike call can now be made concrete—strike with the nurses on their day of protest! The TUC must now be pressed to organise a national strike for 14 March.

The NHS has a special place in the minds of the whole working class. There is a general feeling that health workers should not have to strike, even with emergency cover, and that the rest of the trade union movement should fight for them.

But this health dispute is on the crest of a new wave of industrial unrest—Fords, seafarers and pit deputies—with other disputes bubbling to the surface. Thatcher believed she had tamed the unions. Now Tory ministers are once again complaining of the 'British disease.'

A 24 hour general strike could finally put the nail in the coffin of the Tory myth that unions had been fundamentally weakened and 'marginalised'. It would give workers themselves a sense of their real power.

But it should not be a day of inaction, a mere refusal to attend work. It must be a day of mass pickets and major labour movement demonstrations on the themes: back the health workers, for an end to the Tory government and for a socialist Labour government.

In Italy in the 70s the union leaders called one 24 hour strike after another. But rather than build on workers' militancy, this dissipated it. It is clear that for the union leaders this was a means to allow the workers to let off steam.

But in Britain now, a one day general strike would mark a watershed in relations between the working class and the Thatcher government at least as they have developed since the miners' strike. Then too on a number of occasions generalised class action was implicit in the situation.

A 24 hour national stoppage is a mass protest action. It is a warning to the ruling class and their government—back down or face further action by a newly embattled, self-confident working class.

In 1972 workers were spontaneously walking out in solidarity with five London dockers jailed under the Tories' Industrial Relations Act. The TUC was compelled to threaten a one day general strike. Even that was sufficient to secure the release of the 'Pentonville Five'.

Under the pressure of continuing industrial activity, with gas workers and civil servants striking, the TUC called a one day strike for May Day 1973.

Now sympathy for the health workers has a triggered a flood of grievances by section after section of workers. There is a new generation of trade union activists straining at the leash to take action, and the health battle has given them the issue to rally around. If the TUC fails to launch the call for national action, they must prepare to bring their fellow workers out on 14 March.

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A book that shows how to fight

Liverpool—A City That Dared To Fight
By Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn

"WE DID not anticipate how relevant the lessons of the book would be today," said Peter Taaffe at the press conference to launch the book *Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight*, which he has co-written with ex-Liverpool councillor Tony Mulhearn.

The book has already sold 1500 copies. The press conference attracted the interest of all the serious papers, IRN and BBC radio and TV.

It is particularly relevant in Scotland, Peter Taaffe said, in the struggle against the poll tax: "The vast majority are opposed to this tax, but the Labour leaders have made it clear that the struggle is to be restricted to Parliament."

"But the history of this government is that they do not listen to parliamentary speeches. Only when a mass struggle is mobilised, as it was in Liverpool, can the labour movement force the iron lady to retreat."

"Scottish councils have the same choice as in Liverpool. Either they can get the odium of implementing the poll tax or, like Liverpool, say no, refuse to collect it and call a one-day general strike. Otherwise they might as well resign their positions."

"There is an explosive situation developing on the housing estates. The government has made a big error. The poll tax will involve tenants and owner-occupiers, old and young. The whole position of the government could become untenable if Labour takes a stand on this issue."

"But if the labour movement does not act, there are real dangers. The Scottish National Party, with-

their slogan of 'Can't pay, won't pay' are trying opportunistically to regain their position."

"Elsewhere there have been big swings against Labour in council by-elections where Labour councils have carried out cuts."

"The book is a rich tapestry of the labour movement in the city of Liverpool" said Tony Mulhearn: "It cuts through all the distortions, lies and calumny poured on Liverpool's council and provides a clear record of why the city council and *Militant* supporters went down the road they did."

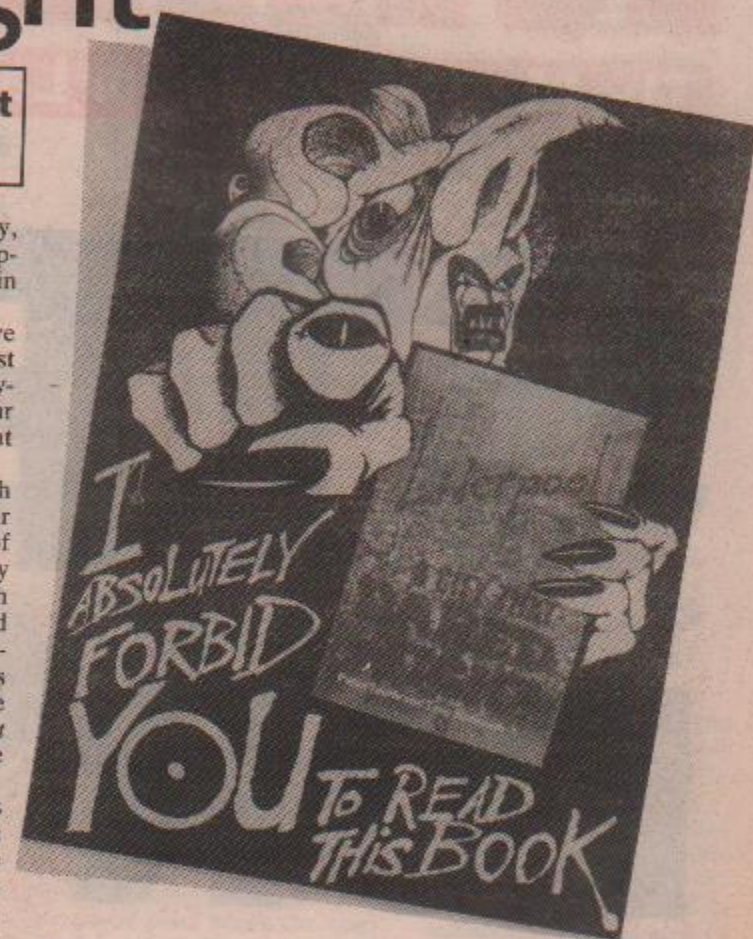
"The book demonstrates that people received more information about the council's finances than from any other council in any other period. There was a City Treasurer in every pub who knew all the jargon about deficit financing."

He contrasted the Liverpool council struggle with other Labour councils today, including the present leadership in Liverpool, who are grovelling before Nicholas Ridley and being dismissed with contempt.

"Keva Coombes is now the prisoner of the right-wing majority in the Labour group. He is proceeding, as we predicted, on a route to a dead end. He claims to have attempted to negotiate 'with more intellectual ability'."

"But the idea that you can get results by talking softly in secret meetings has been disproved. Such approaches will be treated with utter contempt."

By Pat Craven



Get your copy of the poster for the book, 18'X14', on gloss paper. 75p plus 25p postage, from Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL.

Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight

"I have read this book and recommend it to you as a fair and true account of what really happened in Liverpool between 1983 and 1987"—Tony Byrne, leader of Liverpool City Council 1986-87 and one of the 47 surcharged councillors.

Special Offer. Your last chance—offer closes 13 February. Softback £5+90p post, hardback £8+£1.20 post. Cheques to Fortress Books. From Fortress Books, PO Box 141, London E2 ORL.

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Socialism devalued

AT THE same time as Fords workers were putting on their pickets' arm bands and health workers were taking militant industrial action, Labour's leaders were discussing a document that declared the class struggle and the party's socialist principles out of date.

Nearly 30 years ago right wing Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskill, tried to remove the socialist Clause Four from the Party constitution. Only outraged opposition from ordinary members and trade unionists stopped him.

Now the document on 'socialist values', presented on 4 February to a joint meeting of Labour's national executive and shadow cabinet by Roy Hattersley and Neil Kinnock, is exactly in the Gaitskill mould.

With its concentration on individual liberty rather than collective rights and socialist democracy, it reads like a condensed ver-

sion of Hattersley's book, published last year.

Written by a leading representative of the old right, this document is merely a restatement of their traditional acceptance of the 'market'—in other words capitalism. It is to the right of any Labour election manifesto of the last three decades.

Market

Four months after the most dramatic collapse in stock market prices, as the capitalist world teeters on the brink of the most severe recession for 50 years, Kinnock and Hattersley have discovered that "the operation of demand and supply... is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption."

Of course the market should be regulated here and there, but 'democratic socialists believe in market allocation'. Perhaps they should ask the victims of

the capitalist market—the four million unemployed or the 13 million in poverty—whether they think its operation is "satisfactory".

Any ideas of replacing, even gradually, the contradictions and persistent crises of capitalism with a planned, publicly owned economy have been scotched.

They repeat the traditional, ignorant reply of the right that the only alternative to the 'market' is the 'command economy', that is the allocation of goods by a self-interested bureaucracy, as in Russia. But nationalisation under democratic workers' management, with the modern, educated working class would not tolerate any bureaucratic elite, and would ensure production according to needs not according to some official decree.

At the meeting even some of the right were concerned by such open

revision of socialist commitment. Robin Cook recognised that markets are "inefficient and unfair". Jack Cunningham said: "The market does not work at all," it is fixed by the private sector. Frank Dobson commented: "The poor can't do well out of markets."

But there is a sick irony about Kinnock and Hattersley's obsession with 'individual liberty', which comes a poor second to profit under capitalism, anyway. For within the Labour Party, Kinnock is trying to impose a Stalinist gag on the liberty of anyone to question him—Prescott, Warburton, Tony Benn and most of all *Militant* supporters.

Labour workers must organise as they did in 1959 to stop this assault on the left and on socialism within their party.

By Jeremy Birch

Make the Tories pay

THE NURSES' action has finally brought the crisis in the NHS out in the open. The Tories' statistics on funding have failed to quell the bitterness of health workers, facing terrible staff shortages and low pay.

30,000 nurses are leaving the NHS each year, and only 27,000 are joining. The shortage of trained nurses and lack of funds has led to ward closures and fewer beds. There has been a 13 per cent drop in the number of acute care beds in England since 1979.

It is true that the figures for total spending on the NHS have risen—from £8,000 million in 1979,

to £21,000 million now. But the increase needed to meet the demands of an ageing population is running well ahead of real spending on hospitals. NHS inflation is also much higher than the general rate of inflation. The cost of drugs, for instance, rose by 17 per cent in 1986, compared to 5 per cent for general inflation.

The Tories have promised an extra £700 million for 1988-89, but want to give £2,000 million in tax cuts for the rich in the budget.

Militant demands:

* A massive injection of funds into the NHS. Give the £2 billion tax cuts to the NHS! This is needed immediately, just to restore the standard of service to previous

levels before the cuts.

* A 20 per cent pay increase for all health workers, including nurses, but with a minimum base-line of £135 per week. Ancillary workers' basic pay is £14.62 below the lowest paid local government workers.

* A 35 hr week for all health workers and a programme of recruitment and training to restore staffing levels in the NHS.

* The reversal of all privatisation, and an end to private contracts.

* The abolition of all private medicine, and for the private sector to be integrated into the NHS. Consultants stopped from doing private work using NHS facilities—all NHS workers to have the same conditions of work.

* A democratically run NHS—an end to government-appointed officials. Regional and district health authorities to be run by democratically elected committees of health workers, health trade unions and local community representatives.

* The abolition of all prescription charges, dental and optician's charges.

* The nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control.

* The nationalisation of the 200 key monopolies and the implementation of a socialist, planned economy to provide the necessary funding and resources for a modern, fully equipped and staffed health service.

FIGHTBACK IN THE NHS



MILITANT MEETINGS

HACKNEY Crown and Castle, Dalston, 7.30pm 11 February. Speaker Myrna Shaw, Nupe.

BATTERSEA York Library, Wye St, SW11. 7.30pm 10 February. Speakers include Ken Spearpoint, Nupe.

BRIXTON St Matthew's Meeting Place, Brixton SW2. 7.30pm Thursday 18 February

PONTYPRIDD Rose and Crown Pub, Graig, Pontypridd. 7.30pm 11 February. Speaker from Cohse.

STEVENAGE Swimming Pool Thursday 11 Feb, 8 pm. Speaker from Lister Hospital.

PETERBOROUGH. Great Northern Hotel Tuesday 1 March 7.30pm. Speaker: Ron Craven, Nupe Nimrod Sejake (Salep).

ILKESTON, Derbyshire. Defend the NHS, one day general strike! 29 Feb. 7.30 pm. New Inn, Ilkeston.

CARMARTHEN, West Wales. NHS crisis. 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Carmarthen Library.

PECKHAM, London. Wed 10 Feb, 7.30pm. Station Pub Camberwell New Road, SE5.

LEWISHAM. Thursday 11 February 7.30pm. Riverdale Centre, Lewisham town centre.

MEETINGS PLANNED to launch *Liverpool-A City that Dared to Fight* will also have speakers from the health service.

NEWCASTLE Thursday 11 February. Corner house, Heaton Road, Heaton.

LEEDS Sunday 14 February 7.30 pm. The Little Londoner, city centre.

EDINBURGH Monday 15th. 7.30pm Cafe Royal, east end of Princes St, (behind Wimpy Bar)

BRISTOL Monday 15th. 7.30pm Orince Rupert, Fairfax St.

GLASGOW Tuesday 16th. 7.30pm. McLellan Galleries.

SWANSEA Tuesday 16th 7.30pm POEU Club, St Mary St.

MANCHESTER Wednesday 17th 7.30pm Southern Hotel, Mauldeth Rd West. Withington

BIRMINGHAM Thursday 18th. New Imperial Hotel, Temple St (off New St.)

LPYS meetings

LEICESTER. Thur 11 Feb, 7.30pm. Spread Eagle Pub Charles Street, Leicester.

Public Meeting Greater Manchester NHS Trade Union Support Committee

Mon 15 Feb, 7.30pm. Free Trade Hall

Speakers: John Tocher (secretary, NW confed) Christine Sharp (secretary, Withington Hospital joint shop stewards' committee). Chair: Eddie Fury (Sgtt NEC).

Sell Militant

"PAPERS WERE snatched out of our hands". "Drivers were winding down car windows stretching out to buy a copy". Militant sellers reported a great response on the NHS demonstrations in London.

Successes included 150 sold outside London hospital, Whitechapel, over 100 at the demo from Hackney Town Hall (see front page).

24 out of 50 pickets at Brook hospital (Woolwich) bought Militant, 26 were sold at Sussex County hospital in 45 minutes; 18 at Preston, North Shields; 18 at St. James hospital, Leeds and 23 outside Homerton hospital in visiting hours.

Total sales at Liverpool Royal reached 100 last week! £40 was raised for the fighting fund. Other sellers in Merseyside with a door-to-door petition supporting the strike got 200 signatures and sold 22 Militants. Shirley and Ian Trall from Tower Hamlets have sold 100 papers this week mainly at their local hospital.

Street sales are also up. 32 were sold in Rye Lane, Peckham with £15 Fighting Fund from stickers and asking for the solidarity price!

Sales at Ford's plants are off to a good start too with one third of pickets at Basildon plant buying a copy.

We ask all readers to increase sales by contacting the Circulation Dept. for an order. All sellers must make sure workers everywhere, particularly at hospitals, can get our paper. Don't miss out on massive sales!

SAVE
YOUR
HEALTH
SERVICE



Guy's Hospital nurses marching to Trafalgar square on 3 February. (see page 4).

Photo: Ben Eastop.

Pressure for action

Round the country

THE DAY of nurses' strike action in **London** finished with a rally called by the London Health Emergency committee at the Camden Centre.

The galleries were packed with protesting health workers with their banners from the different hospitals.

The many speakers received thunderous applause. Striking health workers at St Alban's hospital were welcomed and a special collection held for them.

Despite shouts from the floor for a one day general strike, the TUC health committee speaker could only say "wait and see after the 5 March demonstration".

It was the last speaker, a nurse from Charing Cross, who called for "all out on Budget Day", and the meeting erupted with applause and cheering.

By Soraya Lawrence.

LAST WEEKEND nearly a thousand marched through the market town of **Retford**, protesting against the closure of the local casualty ward.

It would take people in many villages an hour and three quarters' bus journey to reach the nearest alternative casualty in Worksop—if there was a bus!

Whole families from babies to OAPs were marching; some of them affluent people in pinstripes or fur coats.

The labour movement should give direction to this groundswell of anger.

In **St Albans**, Cohse invited shop stewards to a meeting to organise industrial support for Hill End hospital strikers.

In **Stevenage**, Militant supporter Steve Glennon moved a resolution at the local trades council for a 'workers' council' to prepare for the 5 March demonstration.

The proposal was passed unanimously for a meeting on 15 February of all shop stewards, convenors, union branch officers and trades council delegates. They would elect a committee to organise factory gate and public meetings. Initiatives like this will give enormous extra strength to the NHS workers.

SHOP STEWARDS in **Mid Cheshire** have called for a local one day strike on 19 February when Crewe District Health Authority meet to announce more cuts.

The decision came from a meeting of 90 people, including 40 nurses from Weaverham's threatened Grange Hospital, organised by Mid Cheshire Trades Council NHS Action Committee.

Stewards from ICI invited Grange nurses to speak at a meeting of 100. All but one voted to back the one hour regional strike on 19 February and support nurses at local hospital gates. The action committee is now asking stewards to ballot members for all out strike on 19 February.

Nurses are angry that when Tory stooge Nick Bosk resigned as health authority general manager with two of his lieutenants to go, he got £40,000 (two years' redundancy pay). The authority faces £2 million cuts including

losing 21 out of 34 beds at Northwich Infirmary.

The Tories won't have a chance of privatising the NHS if all workers support the 5 March demo and the 19 February strike and lobby.

SCOTLAND'S HEALTH workers are intensifying their action to defend the NHS, seeking support for the one day health strike called by the Scottish TUC.

Lightning strikes are breaking out every day, as health boards press ahead with privatisation plans.

All kitchen porters in **Glasgow** walked out on 9 February, when the Glasgow board announced plans for private contractors to come into the kitchens. Nurses are working to rule, and at mass meetings there is a new mood of anger and a unity amongst workers which was not present before.

Health union shop stewards are visiting factories and workplaces, such as the Savings Bank, Yarrow shipyard and the pits to get support for the 24 February action. By Ronnie Stevenson.

Backing for 24hr general strike call

THE CALL for a 24 hour general strike to defend the health service has been backed by: Naga's London Health Service Area Committee, Tax School Keepers branch, GMB Liverpool 5 and UCU Coventry Teachers. Liverpool District Labour Party voted by 181 votes to back the call for the regional general strike.

FIGHTBACK IN THE NHS



Taking the city

NO VOTE for strike action had been taken at Guy's hospital, but feelings were running high. Two RCN nurses said: "If nothing happens after today strikes will take place at Guy's, especially after Thatcher's 3 per cent offer!"

They would have struck if the other unions had come out and many other RCN members felt the

BY EARLY afternoon excitement spread through Guy's as nurses, medics and ancillary workers gathered for a demonstration.

Union representatives dashed about, surprised at the turn out of about a thousand, many student nurses and young medics who bear the brunt of shortages and cuts.

As we hit the streets, nurses at the front, the tremendous public sympathy became obvious. Nurses dashed up to cars and buses to hand out leaflets. The support fed back to the marchers who became increasingly jubilant.

I cannot remember a march with such a wide impact. It seemed to take the whole city with it. Even a businessman in a big Jaguar gave a clenched fist

same way.

"Cohse, Nupe and the RCN should join together to form a plan of action. But the RCN is not interested in what the members say. What Trevor Clay said about Cohse and Nupe nurses not caring is rubbish. We've all trained together, there is no difference between us."

salute.

Chanting echoed under the bridges and underpasses: 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie! -out, out, out! NHS is best, no to the private sector', and 'What do we want? Decent wages. When do we want it? NOW!'

Near Aldwych the march stopped. Some marchers went to Trafalgar Square, while nurses went to a patio off a side street where Margaret Crear, from Bermondsey Labour Party women's section got a good reception for the concrete proposal of a one day general strike!

Meanwhile, a limousine drove past in the now empty street below with Princess Anne inside, saved from any embarrassing encounter with protesting commoners!

Why we are angry

A NIGHT NURSE at a Liverpool hospital writes about worsening conditions.

At 8.15 I arrive on the wards with an auxiliary nurse and a bank enrolled or staff nurse. Nurses from other hospitals are often used as a stop gap and are unfamiliar with hospital and ward procedures.

One member of day staff hands over the report on the condition of the 35 patients along with the medical staff's recommendations and any problems left over. Day staff officially finish at 8.30 and are paid until then but they often don't leave the ward until 9.00.

Ours is a 12 hour shift with two half hour breaks; the hospital does not let us use the kitchen to make a cup of tea.

We have 35 acute orthopaedic patients in our care; this already makes the work exhausting because the patients are immobile. It is made worse by the lack of basic facilities like staff, linen and medications.

During the winter, due to lack of medical beds, we find ourselves with half medical and half or-

thopaedic patients.

The medical patients do not get the care they deserve; nurses try to cope but they haven't the right equipment like oxygen, or the right drugs. Patients may wait days to see a consultant. Meanwhile the waiting list for orthopaedic operations gets longer.

The house officer has many wards to cover for emergencies like deterioration in a patient's condition. The night duty house officer has already worked a 24 hour duty and can work a 140 hour week. Often patients are woken in the early hours to be seen by the doctor.

When we can take a break from the mayhem, it is snatched in a back room. No food is served to night staff. A vending machine serves crisps and chocolate bars in an empty canteen.

In seven years of NHS nursing I have seen the callous rundown of services and conditions. That is why nurses, ancillaries and medical staff are so angry.

By a Cohse member



Nurses in the Trafalgar Square protest.

Photos: Dave Sinclair.

Nurses' day of

THE HEALTH workers' day of action startled the Tories in its size, enthusiasm and support.

The Tory press, as usual pretended that anyone who fights against Thatcher is in the pay of the devil or the Kremlin. They had headlines like "Red Yobbos" about the attempt to present a petition to Downing Street. As the articles below show, their claims are nonsense.

THE TRAFALGAR Square demonstration was organised exclusively by London health service workers who had already organised local pickets and rallies.

There was a relaxed, festive mood; this made the police reaction even more incredible.

When I arrived people were crushed up against a heavy line of police and vans. A nurse had been hauled away for standing on a police van to shout to the crowd.

The police had greatly upset the stewards from the various hospitals. Somebody had to organise things otherwise a lot of people could have been injured and hospital workers

demoralised.

So I pushed to the front of the crowd and demanded to speak to the officer in charge. The police insisted the march could not go through Whitehall. The sanctity of Downing St. was all they worried about.

After angry discussion small groups of marchers were allowed down Whitehall to the Commons while a small delegation could take a petition to Downing St.

The march was now very angry, so I pulled three stewards from major London hospitals to one side. We agreed to divide the march up into different groups while stewards from the hospitals explained through the amplifying

system what was going on.

I appealed to the march to finish on a united buoyant note, explaining that a rally had been organised in the Commons where people were already waiting to speak.

When the march divided, I went with six nurses from different hospitals to hand in a petition at Downing St. A Tory MP came too, insisting that the media should not be present.

Petition

The nurses refused to hand in the petition until the press came. Thatcher didn't even bother to come to the door, we were received by a doorman.

Back at the Commons, the police had cordoned off the march to force it back over Westminster Bridge. Anger was mounting.

Eventually I persuaded them to let small groups through to lobby MPs. They only allowed nurses in

uniform; so I appealed for nurses to come through first and for others to follow.

The meeting can only be described as ecstatic even though many had come to the march straight from night duty and had not slept for 24 hours. They were on their feet, demanding that the press be told of the police harassment.

Workers continuously spoke from the floor and applauded speakers who demanded further action, particularly Dave Nellist MP, who called for a one day general strike.

I closed the meeting by saying that a small group of health workers had organised hospitals throughout London—imagine what would be possible if the union leadership just raised its little fingers to organise a one day general strike. At this point the meeting erupted.

By Mick Barwood
(Bloc organiser)

Middlesex / UCH

ON THE two days before 3 February medical students from University College (UCH) and Middlesex Hospital organised meetings with nurses, COHSE and NUPE members. Medical students are often quite reactionary but there was a surprising degree of support.

On the morning medical students leafleted other students to persuade them to join the action; some had already joined the picket lines. In 1982 when nurses took action, many medical students did the nurses' work and did not come out in support.

At 12.30 a rally outside UCH, where many victims of the King's Cross fire had been treated by nurses who were now striking, were joined by Camden NALGO members. The rally moved off boldly down Tottenham Court Road to the hooting of car horns.

By a London medical student

London Hospital

THE MASSIVE steps of London hospital in Whitechapel were packed by hundreds of hospital workers. Speakers had difficulty making themselves heard over chants, cheers and tooting car horns.

About 100 postmen from the near by sorting office came to the picket line to show solidarity. Ban-

London strikes

nurses and delegates from other workplaces appeared at midday.

"This takes me back to our ancillary workers' strike," a retired porter supporting the picket told me. "We tried to get something going, but there was only us striking then. I'm glad to see them succeeding this time."

St Clement's

THERE ARE only 11 Nupe members at St Clement's psychiatric hospital, Bow. But all voted to strike.

"Cohse members voted 33-29 against," their shop steward, Jack Koosenlin said. "But 12 of the night shift came out on the picket line. I wanted to strike and I think we will win."

The ludicrous claim that only 200 nurses struck was answered by Nupe steward, Franka Cadee:

"At Whitechapel 170 out of 187 voted to come out. People knew all the arguments; they just wanted to vote for the strike."

"It's great it's happened at last. In my three years in the NHS, the job's changed from looking after four patients to half a ward. It's not nursing at all."

"You get better pay in the agen-

cies. There were people working at the London who are still there, but working for an agency. It must cost the NHS a lot."

By Tony Cross

Edgware

AT EDGWARE Hospital, some nurses were striking, though emergency cover reduced the numbers. But nurses on their days off, and in their breaks ensured a lively picket.

"I think all health workers should come out together" one nurse said. "Then the unions could decide how to work the emergency cover. At present management can exploit the nurses on duty on these days."

"Cohse and Nupe locally work together well. We're no longer competing on the RCN's terms, about who can give the better insurance. We're part of the labour movement."

Lewisham

AT LEWISHAM hospital, one nurse told us "Patients say they would be on the picket line with us if they could".

The trades council organised a march from the Town Hall to the hospital. Sean from Forest Hill who is unemployed was on the demo having bought a one day pass to go round the picket lines showing his support.

Health workers talking

WILL TOWERS, a student nurse at King's College said that at times wards got so bad that the sister broke down crying.

"The whole system is in crisis" he said. He and other students had organised the strike by the small Cohse branch. 90 per cent had voted in favour and there was wide sympathy from RCN members.

"There was a problem organising the strike as many branch organisers had only just joined the

union and were inexperienced.

"There will be more strikes. It's rubbish to say the strikes are unpopular—look at the support we are getting today. Next time we will try to get more support from the ancillaries.

"We took a petition round the patients and only one refused to sign it. One woman who was about to give birth said she would come down to the picket line after she had had the baby!"

"THERE ARE delays in discharging patients because there are not enough facilities to send them to. One has been here for six years; there is nowhere he can be sent in the community. Other patients who need to come in have to go elsewhere".

A psychiatric nurse at St Clement's.

"IT IS not just the nurses but ancillaries, porters, admin and clerical staff, fighting for the health service.

"We have taken strike action several times. The patients do not get hurt. One 80 year-old came to outpatients for treatment and refused to cross the picket line. With support like that we will win."

Ray Hill, Branch Secretary, Tower Hamlets Health Authority Nalگو.

"EVERY DAY we need agency midwives because of lack of staff and intensive care nurses work for agencies on their days off. Students look after as many as 12 patients, some of them seriously ill.

"Women in labour are being left alone because there are not enough staff in the labour wards. Changing rooms are a rubbish dump because of the shortage of domestics.

"A midwife gets paid no more after one and a half years' extra training than a staff nurse. A lot are leaving".

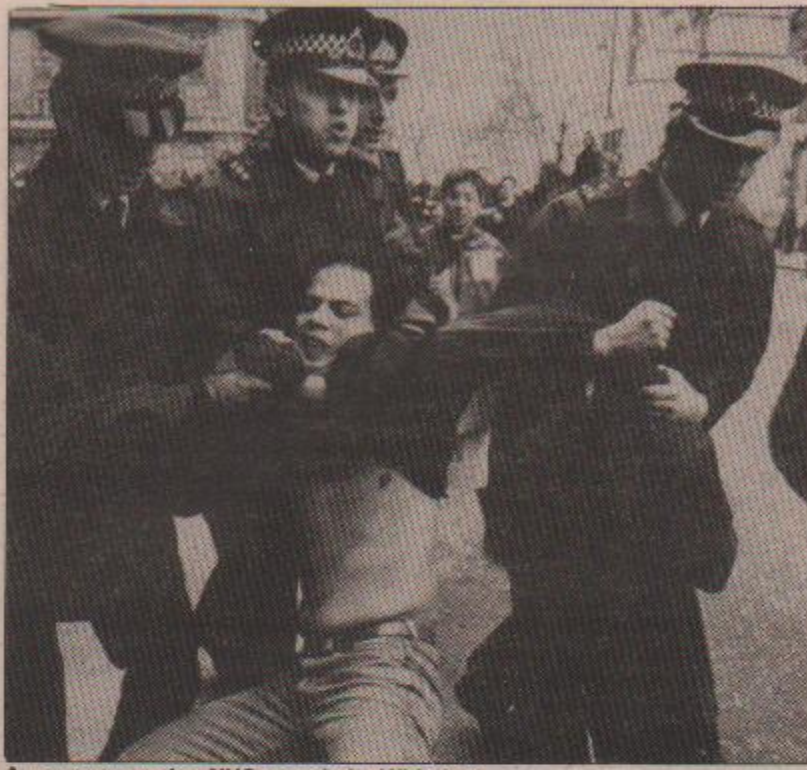
Marianne Idle, staff midwife, London Hospital.



"It just needed one little spark to start the fire", said Sarah Heptonstall who had left the RCN the previous week to join Cohse in King's College.

"A year ago some nurses were saying that nursing would blow up. It was the Manchester strike which started it. When I first started I really enjoyed my work. Now I struggle to work feeling that patients don't get the care they deserve.

"Each day you get allocated eight patients, sometimes more. Three may need bed baths, two may be very ill with drips. Then there are all the pressures due to lack of staffing. Often there is only one staff nurse on the ward—it's very dangerous".



An arrest on the NHS march in Whitehall.

defiance

WHEN MARCHERS arrived from the north of the square, a great cheer went up. The crowd turned and began pouring down Northumberland Avenue away from the police blockade.

Thousands of nurses in uniform and medics in white coats, waving placards and leaflets, ran down the street in between lines of traffic. Car and bus drivers grinned and tooted their horns, policemen were trying to keep up, one hand on their helmets as they ran.

At the bottom of the street, two policemen stood across the wide road with arms outstretched, but the crowd soon overwhelmed them and ran on trying to get into Downing Street.

Police moved in to block the street. There were scuffles and a couple of arrests, a nurse was screaming at the police. Then the demonstration reformed along the Embankment and went on to Westminster.

As marchers dispersed, hooters from two barges echoed across the river as they passed Parliament, underlining the support for the protests.

By Ben Eastop.



Sheffield

THERE WAS a great show of strength in Sheffield even though many nurses had to provide emergency cover.

Trade unionists from all over the city joined us on our picket lines while nurses from all organisations joined the picket in rotation.

"Flying pickets" kept everyone informed of progress such as the miners at Frickley colliery who refused to cross a nurses' picket at their pit. Kentucky Fried Chicken workers bought us food all day and shops bought sweets and drinks.

At the rally of over 700, mainly health workers, many nurses called for better leadership. Nine million trade unionists could turn the tide on Thatcherism.

One nurse said Kinnock didn't need to have 'Labour listens' tea parties to invited audiences, he should just spend five minutes on an NHS picket line.

I've worked in the NHS since 1979 and never seen such unity and feeling of strength. We won't back down now. In Sheffield we're building an NHS Broad

Left and health workers will be coming to Bloc. From there the pressure must go on all our union leaders for the TUC to mobilise for 5 March and call a one day general strike.

We have the pit deputies, Ford workers, civil service and teachers all ready for action, what more do the TUC want? Let's reduce Thatcher to the state she's reduced the NHS to.

By Ruth Herdman
Cohse shop steward, Sheffield.

Coventry

NURSES AT Walsgrave hospital in Coventry told Kalvinder Kaur. "We're striking because of the system not just for money. It's about patients not having enough facilities like knives and forks and little nagging things like that."

A renal nurse warned: "It'll get to the stage where we have to turn patients away." There are 22 beds on that ward but only 18 can be used; there's not enough money to keep them all open.

The general medical ward is the busiest. Patients are in the cor-

Leeds

NURSES, CLERICAL and technical staff all took part in the action at St James, Leeds, the largest hospital in Europe. Some electricians came out in defiance of their union leaders.

There was marvellous support with one driver stopping his car to give £20 to the pickets. A coach

load of miners from Frickley colliery turned up in support. Hundreds went to an outdoor rally at lunch time.

By a Cohse member

Carmarthen

THERE WERE several days of action in Wales including a strike

of Nupe nurses and health workers outside St James' hospital, Carmarthen after an 88 per cent vote for a 4 hour strike and picket.

One woman was on a weekly contract and endangered her job by striking but felt it was worthwhile to defend the NHS. A demo is planned in Llanelli on 13 February and a day of action on 1 March.



Health secretary John Moore lobbied by nurses. Inset: Derbyshire miner and ex-Clay Cross councillor John Dunn, whose wife works for the NHS, who stuck this poster on the podium when Moore was speaking.

Round the country

E. Midlands

ON 4 FEBRUARY, a thousand strong demonstration marched through Nottingham on the city's liveliest protest for years. A Nacods banner was prominent on the march and many other Notts miners took the day off.

Leicester also saw its biggest demo for years with Nalگو, UCW and TGWU members supporting the NHS. Local Cohse officials opposed the strike but there was a strike and picket at one hospital.



YTURC change strike date

"STRIKE ON 14 March" will be the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign's call to all workers and youth.

YTURC had planned a youth strike on 16 March, but has changed it to 14 March in solidarity with the health workers. Not only youth but all workers should call for a 24 hour strike.

Their combined anger could be organised into a massive show of strength with rallies and demonstrations in every city and town.

YTURC supporters should immediately go to trades councils, union branches and district committees, and Labour Parties. They should raise resolutions calling for a one day strike to be sent to trade union leaders and the TUC general council.

- ★ Solidarity with the health workers;
- ★ Defend the NHS;
- ★ Stop Thatcher's attacks on youth;
- ★ No compulsory YTS;
- ★ Workers and youth—all out on 14 March!

By Davie Archibald
YTURC national secretary

"Tories want YTS serfs" — Benn

THE FURTHER Education Labour Students conference held on 30/31 January was attended by over 120 FE student activists. Tony Benn told a

We've had enough!

Youth strike 11 Feb In Scotland

"WHAT'S THIS about, son?"

"It's a leaflet about our Scottish youth strike against YTS conscription and for real jobs for youth. We want parents' support for their children's right to strike for a future."

"Against YTS? Well I'll tell you this, you've got 100 per cent backing from us!"

These were the comments of just one of the thousands of parents who demonstrated against Strathclyde regional council's plan to close over 40 schools when they were approached by supporters of the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC).

She was with 50 parents from Easterhouse in Glasgow who all echoed her words. This shows that working class parents will support YTURC'S campaigns and strikes when they know what they are about.

Hundreds of teachers, ordinary members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) added their support and apologised for their leaders who had condemned YTURC.

"It's never been discussed at our conference, they're speaking for themselves," was a common complaint.

rally before it: "Young people would be forced into slave labour with the introduction of compulsory youth training. They would be conscripted to work for benefit level pay and this would create a new group of serfs or slaves for employers."

A Militant readers' meeting was also organised jointly with

By Stuart Allen
Unemployed ex-trainee, Glasgow

Add this to the tremendous unanimous vote of support at the Scottish socialist teachers conference and it is easy to see that many ordinary teachers see YTS as slave labour and support young people when they take action against it.

Support

On 11 February YTURC is calling a youth strike in both East and West Scotland. We mean to tap this huge layer of support among older working people. And we will organise the anger, discontent and frustrations of youth in Scotland in a half-day strike against YTS conscription and for at least £55 per week minimum and unionisation on the schemes.

All we need is a meagre £624 million from the March budget to pay trainees this minimum.

Inqaba, the journal of the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC, where £289 was raised.

The Conference ended with a unanimous vote in favour of building for the NUS action, starting with the national shutdown on the 11 February as a build up to the youth strike called by YTURC in March.

Thousands of youth will march with us on 11 February. With the help of older workers and the national strike in March we are going to force Thatcher to listen to working class youth.

...and Kent

"WE'VE HAD enough! It's about time someone organised something like this," has been the response to leaflets calling for a students' strike throughout Kent on 11 February.

Thousands of school, further education and higher education students will be protesting against the Tories' Education Bill and attacks on young people.

The Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) and YTURC members helped establish a



go members will be striking on the day too.

Every school and college has been leafleted and had a mass meeting.

In Ashford when Young Socialists leafleted the technical college, students took bundles of leaflets in and went round leafletting the classes. In the Art class the lecturer promptly stopped the class and got the students designing posters for the strike. All the lecturers have given their support.

Buses have been booked to bring students to a rally in Canterbury on the day.

By Marc Green
Kent YTURC

Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign



YTURC

"FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS" NATIONAL CONFERENCE

1-3 APRIL WINTER GARDENS BLACKPOOL

For more information contact: Davie Archibald, YTURC National Secretary, c/o 29 Marlborough Avenue, London E8 4JP.

Give us a day's pay

continued from page 1

Already we have had donations from readers of well over one day's pay. T.Horn, a Leicestershire TGWU member donated £134. W.Tierney, a GMB member from Liverpool donated £100 of his winnings from Militant's raffle. A reader in Kent donated £120 from the sale of records and in South West London readers raised £110.

So angry was J.Thompson, of Bradford North LP, over the Labour Party leadership's witch-hunt that she donated £10 to the fighting fund. Walter Ursell of West Wickham in Kent was so impressed with the book, Liverpool-A

City that Dared to Fight, that he sent us £10.

Take this appeal to your workmates. Explain that Militant is a workers' paper, with no money other than that donated by workers themselves.

On London hospital picket lines on 3 February hundreds of pounds were donated to the fighting fund by nurses and other workers. Follow their example and send us a donation today!

Militant stickers were eagerly snapped up, with donations of as much as £1. One seller from Southwark raised over £23. £17.62 was raised from the sale of anti-Alton Bill stickers in West Lancashire. So always

ask for the solidarity price and carry a collecting tin!

We now have new stickers with the slogan 'one-day general strike' which can be used.

At the Further Education Labour Students' conference, a magnificent £280 was raised. £33 was raised at the NW Labour Party women's conference. £25 also came from a fighting fund stall in Govan.

We need to smash our target of £50,000 with just four weeks remaining. If you support the demand for a one day general strike, then send us one day's pay now to help us spread the call. With your support we can do it.

Fighting Fund

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 Scotland West	402		2520
2 East Midlands	381		2500
3 London	929		6770
4 Scotland East	254		2150
5 South East	185		1570
6 Southern	215		2020
7 Manchester/Lancs	259		2890
8 Merseyside	463		5360
9 Eastern	177		2260
10 Northern	249		3270
11 South West	85		1270
12 West Midlands	254		3510
13 Yorkshire	311		5950
14 Wales	97		3510
15 National	2418		3790
Total	6677		50,000

Unions must defeat Alton

THE CARRYING of the second reading of Alton's amendment to the 1967 abortion act is a blow to all working class women. It is an attempt to frighten women into continuing with an unwanted pregnancy, with the threat of the police and courts or the dangers of backstreet abortions.

But it was only carried due to the assistance of 35 Labour MPs, openly voting against party policy. Now Neil Kinnock has signalled his intention of voting, along with Thatcher and Steel, for a 24 week limit.

He must be reminded the 1985 Labour Party conference decision was for defending and extending abortion provision, not for restricting it.

Kinnock and other Labour MPs have been taken in by arguments about the viability of the foetus. In line with 'new realism', he imagines he is fitting in with popular opinion.

But this is lending credibility to Alton and SPUC to go for further restrictions. The Labour leaders should be taking them on by campaigning to remove the conditions which cause women to go for late abortions.

This means reversing NHS cuts to provide early abortions and to fund research into safe ways of detecting handicap earlier; ending the right of doctors to prevent women from having abortions, giving women the right to chose.

Social conditions

However, late abortions must be defended for those who capitalism fails - the very young, the poor and those with a foetus with handicap.

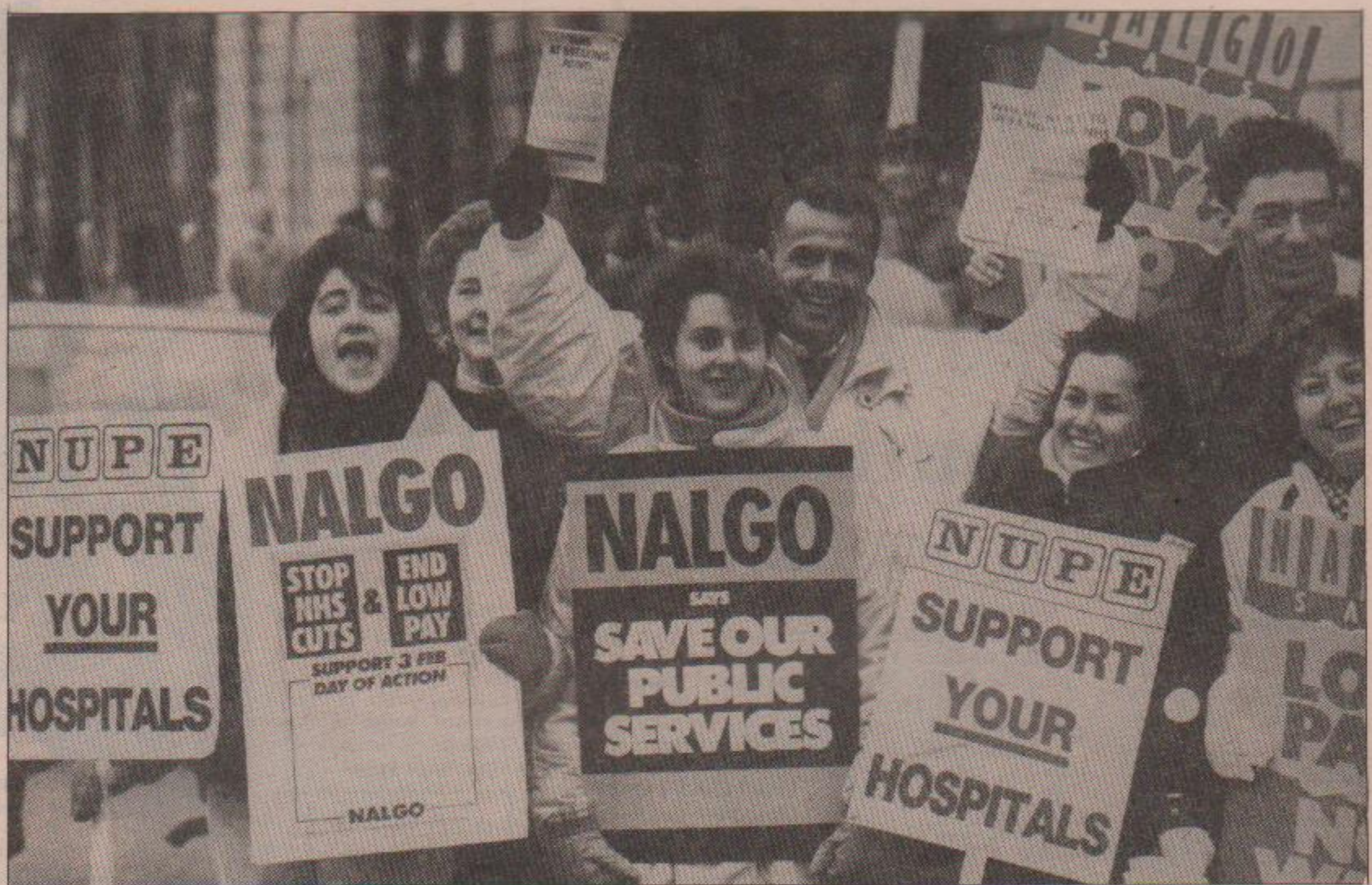
But the main reason women come forward for abortions is social conditions - poverty line benefits and wages, bad housing, the lack of maternity rights for over half of women workers and the lack of safe, reliable contraception.

Why is Neil Kinnock not highlighting these issues in a campaign against Alton, and explaining how a Labour government could tackle them?

The labour and trade union movement must defend its women members from this legislation. The TUC has sponsored the 19 March demonstration, but has committed no resources to the campaign.

In particular BLOC must demand a union reply to the SPUC trade union leaflet and a campaign to explain the issues to all trade unionists. Unions must use their resources to defeat Alton's bill at the third reading in March and smash his reactionary, hypocritical ideas.

By Jane Hartley



Health workers striking on 3 February.

Build the un

THE BROAD Left Organising Committee holds its conference on 13 February. Here in a major interview, prominent BLOC activist and TUC general council member, John Macreadie, comments on the new turn to industrial militancy and the tasks facing the left in the unions. He spoke to *Militant* industrial correspondent, Brian Ingham.

Militant: At present we are seeing the most widespread explosion of militancy for over ten years. Why do you think this activity is taking place?

John: Working people are finding that they have no alternative but to fight to defend their jobs, their services, their wages and their industries. At the Trades Union Congress in Blackpool, in September, there was a debate on the whole question of 'new realism' versus militancy. I argued that the trade unions remained potentially the most powerful force in British society and that it would be only a matter of time before the giant of British labour arose.

At the CPSA Pay Conference in December, again I pointed out that the barrage of attacks upon the rights and conditions of working people may have led to some despair and demoralisation but this would prove to be only very temporary. I predicted that this mood would turn to anger and from anger to action. Sooner rather than later the worm would turn. Those comments in September and December of last year have been absolutely borne out by the marvellous events we are now witnessing.

All the underlying pent-up anger and frustration within society is at last beginning to explode to the surface. To some extent the nurses have given a lead. The myth that militancy does not pay, that Thatcher will never give in to strikes and that there must somehow be another method of defending conditions and services, was totally shattered by the retreat of Thatcher when faced with a strike by 38 Manchester nurses and the threat of a strike by blood transfusion workers.

Workers everywhere have drawn the lesson from this and gained heart. 'Enough is enough', is the message of workers throughout the public sector. In the private sector, with the little upturn in the economy, workers sense that the ground has shifted in their favour. Many understand that a new recession is in the wind which may threaten their security as never before. They are coming to the conclusion that now is the time to make a stand, if they are to claw back some of what they have lost. The mood of one group of workers is feeding that of another.



Militant: Why have the nurses come to the centre of the stage?

John: This group of workers have traditionally refused to take industrial action because of their concern for patients. Their action now is a cry for help and an indication of how bad things have become in the NHS. Working people and the public generally have tremendous respect for the nurses. The vast majority of the population rely on the NHS. They do not need to be told that the nurses and health workers are fighting a battle for all of us.

The Tories are on the defensive. No matter how many million pounds of propaganda they issue, it will have little effect.

The reality is for workers waiting for operations, that despite the marvellous work of the staff, the health service is deteriorating dangerously and something must be done.



John Macreadie.

Now is the time for health workers and the wider labour and trade union movement to act decisively in defence of the NHS.

Militant: On the TUC general council you have raised the call for a one day general strike in support of health workers. What response has this call received?

John: I have been inundated with reports from all over the country that this demand was greeted rapturously at the health workers' rallies on 3 February. It is clear from messages and comments I have received from members of my own union and from others that if the TUC called a one day general strike in defence of the NHS, it would capture the imagination of the entire trade union movement.

The TUC has now called a national rally on Saturday 5 March. I welcome this rally. There is already a great feeling of relief and excitement that at last the leadership of the movement are calling action on the question of the health service and the welfare state.

Properly organised this demonstration will involve hundreds of thousands of workers and their families. It will shake the arrogance of the Tory government.

The question will be posed at the rally though: 'What happens next?'. The Tories would be prepared to ride out one rally, however well organised and

whatever its composition. This is why I have called upon the general council at this rally to launch the call for a one day general strike to co-incide with the Tories' budget preparations.

Accompanied by a mass campaign of preparation in union branches, on shop stewards' committees, in mass meetings, on trades councils, at Labour Parties, Young Socialist branches and women's sections, this call for a one day general strike would have an earth-shattering effect. It would show every worker in Britain that if they stand together and fight they are unconquerable.

The Labour Party leadership also should openly come out firmly in defence of the striking health workers and in support of a one day general strike. It is the mass movement of working people standing up to the onslaught of the Tories that will change the political complexion of Britain. If Labour was seen to be standing shoulder to shoulder with health workers and with working people generally then the respect for the Labour Party and its electoral support would soar.

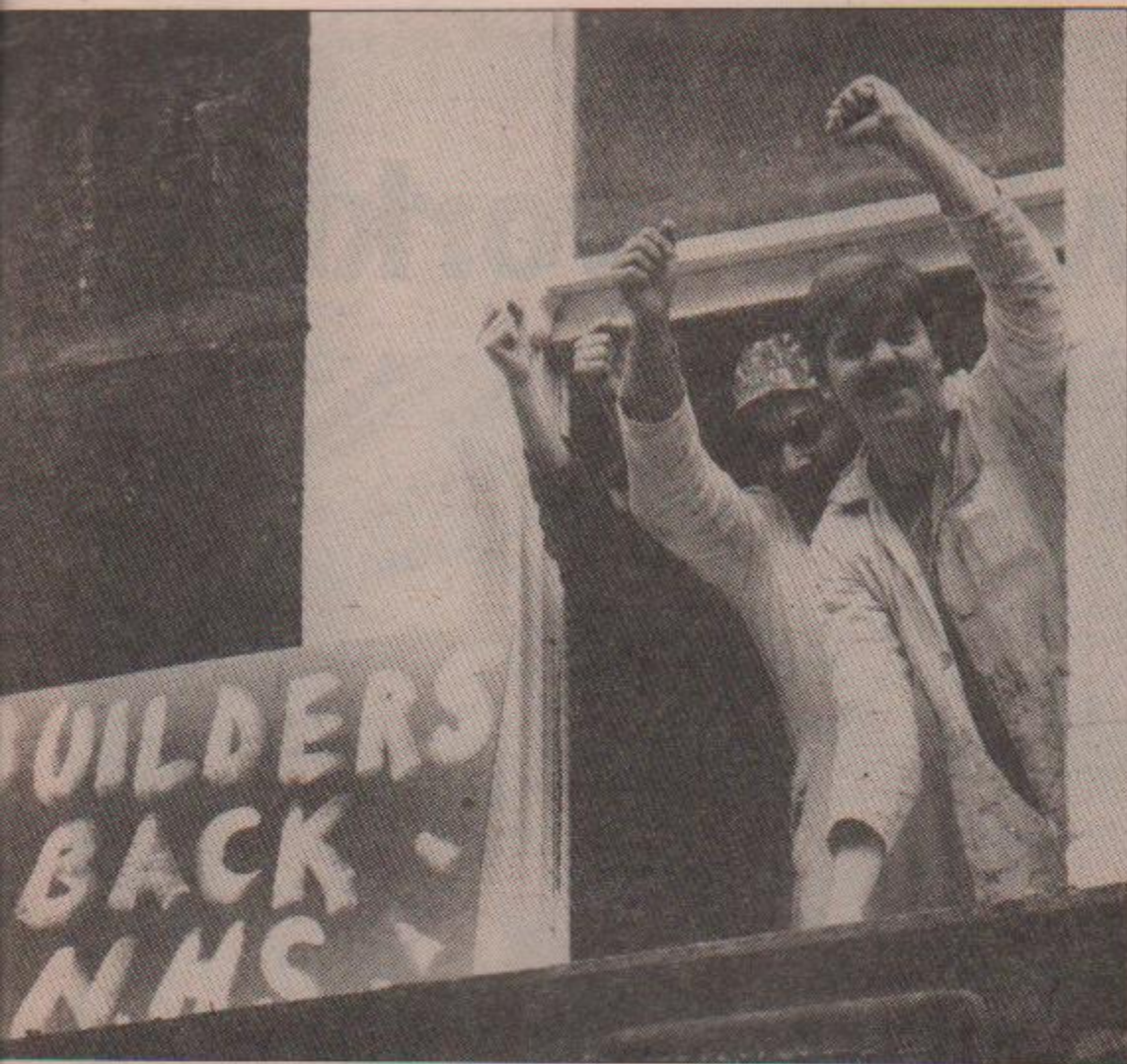


Militant: What are you doing in the CPSA to plan and prepare for the TUC mass demonstration?

John: Immediately the call was made the CPSA NEC set up a working group to plan our union's intervention. Leaflets from the national union will be issued explaining why it is so important that our union supports the health workers and why we should take part. Not only in this demonstration but also in other initiatives being called around the country, including the Scottish TUC's call for a day of action in defence of the NHS.

We want to bring contingents of members from every city in Britain to the rally. Our members

are aw... NHS is... the soc... system... of staff... the san... DHSS... loymen... membe... the hea... and par... to defe... the se... work... Militan... cil of t... for can... signific... workin... justify... the TU... John: E... general... union a... best int... ing clas... But o... struck n... general... tremen... in the e... a whole... been ap... ordinary... to talk... face and... the uni... The... bury its... isolation... and file... would r... workers... a fightin... movem... itself... I hav... by the... others... give a... Arthur... Such at... ways se... resolve... leaders... capitalis... workers... wary of... The... that pec... confron... lic. We



Workers show support for the health strike.

ion left

...e that the attack on the...
...the same attack as that on...
...al security and benefit...
...in this country. The crisis...
...ing in the health service is...
...crisis we face in the...
...d Department of Emp-...
...benefit services. Our...
...will see participation in...
...h demonstration as part...
...el of their own campaign...
...d jobs and to safeguard...
...vices in which they

On the general council
the TUC you have called
campaigns on a number of
issues facing the
class. How would you
these demands upon
?

...is an honour to sit on the...
...ouncil, representing my...
...d attempting to act in the...
...ests of the wider work-

...e of the things that has...
...e in my time so far on the...
...ouncil has been the...
...ous authority that it has...
...s of working people. On...
...number of times I have...
...roached on the street by...
...trade unionists who wish...
...out the problems they...
...who constantly ask what...
...ns are going to do.

...general council should...
...pessimism and end its...
...from the mass of rank...
...workers in this country. It...
...lise then that millions of...
...are waiting for one thing...
...lead from the top of the...
...t, the general council

...been savagely attacked...
...capitalist media, so have...
...ho have attempted to...
...fighting lead, such as...
...cargill and Tony Benn...
...icks levelled at me al-...
...e to stiffen further my...
...t is those trade union...
...ho are applauded by the...
...press who are the ones...
...should be extremely

...ght wing put the view...
...le like myself only want...
...tion. This is an absolute...
...would prefer, as any

...worker would, to have a quiet...
...life, free from insecurity and...
...strife.

...However, the reality is that the...
...Tories are not prepared to...
...concede the reasonable demands...
...made in a quiet civilised manner...
...around the negotiating table by...
...trade union negotiators.

...They are determined that the...
...working class will pay for the...
...economic problems facing their...
...system. Unless we are prepared...
...to fight then we will be totally...
...trampled upon.

Militant: You would not have
been in a position in the last
few months to give a lead on
the general council without
the backing of the left NEC
within CPSA. How did the left
secure such widespread sup-
port inside CPSA?



John: We have only made a start...
...in the CPSA. We do not underes-...
...timate the support which we still...
...have to win. We have achieved a...
...position as a result of 15 years and...
...more of hard work, sacrifice by...
...individuals, attention to detail...
...and by taking up the day to day...
...problems facing our members and...
...being the best fighters on their...
...behalf. In this way Broad Left...
...supporters have earned respect...
...from the members who have then...
...been prepared to elect us to...
...positions of leadership and res-...
...ponsibility.

...We feel it is our duty to repay...
...the confidence of the rank and...
...file, by at all times listening...
...carefully to their problems and...
...aspirations and by giving a clear...
...explanation of the way forward at...
...every stage.

...We work at the top and in the...
...workplaces to improve the lot of...
...our members and to transform...
...our union into a fighting democ-...
...ratic body that is fully equipped...
...to defend the interests of...
...workers.

...Supporters of the Broad Left in...
...unions with a right wing leader-

...ship can match in just a few years...
...what CPSA members have built...
...up over 15, given the explosive...
...situation opening up in Britain on...
...the industrial front.

Militant: What in your opinion
is the role of BLOC?

John: Contrary to the accusa-...
...tions of the right, BLOC is not...
...trying to set up rival unions or a...
...rival TUC. BLOC attempts to...
...bring the activist layer of the...
...unions together to share ex-...
...periences, to learn from our...
...defeats and victories and to try to...
...extend practical help to workers...
...in struggle. But also to deepen...
...and develop the campaign for...
...fighting socialist leadership...
...throughout the trade unions. In...
...the process BLOC campaigns...
...also for the Labour Party to live...
...up to its socialist heritage.

...It is my experience and the...
...experience of millions of trade...
...unionists over many generations...
...that you cannot solve the prob-...
...lems of working people on a...
...lasting basis by trade union strug-...
...gle alone. The day to day prob-...
...lems and struggles of trade...
...unionists are inextricably linked...
...with the need for a socialist soci-...
...ety under the democratic control...
...and management of the working...
...class.

Militant: Finally, you have
made clear your support for
the socialist ideas of Militant.
How valuable do you find
Militant in your daily work?

John: I read *Militant* every week...
...and I support the socialist ideas it...
...puts forward. *Militant* provides...
...for me an explanation of what is...
...happening in society and a glimpse...
...of the problems working peo-...
...ple are facing throughout the...
...world. Above all, it provides...
...theoretical guidance and a clear...
...perspective for the way ahead in...
...the battles against management...
...and the Tories and for a socialist...
...society.

...I recommend every worker...
...particularly every activist in the...
...trade union and labour move-...
...ment, to read *Militant* regularly...
...It will help to sustain them in the...
...fight to defend and improve the...
...conditions of working people and...
...to secure a socialist society.

BLOC

BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE

A fighting policy

- * For the regular election of all union officials.
- * For no trade union official to receive more than the average wage of a skilled worker.
- * Total opposition to all witch-hunts and victimisations within the Labour Party and the unions.
- * For the building of shop stewards' organisations at local, regional and national level in every industry and service.
- * For national industrial action to defeat the Tories' privatisation plans and other attacks on local government.
- * Total opposition to attacks on the working week, like flexible working. For a 35 hour week without loss of pay.
- * For a real campaign by the unions to defeat Alton's Bill on abortion.
- * Opposition to Tory anti-union legislation, and support for any group of workers whose right to strike is threatened.
- * For the election of a Labour government committed to socialist policies.
- * For a fighting socialist leadership of the union movement.
- * Full support for the health workers, for a 24 hour general strike.

Militant International Review

Winter 1988
issue

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the 1929 crash.

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"Sons of the whole working class"

REPRESSION IN the Philippines today, under a nominally democratic government, is even worse than during the last years of the Marcos dictatorship.

Mrs Aquino has abandoned her earlier rhetoric about 'peace and reconciliation', 'human rights' and 'people's power'. These empty phrases gave the people not an extra grain of rice, but only irritated the military warlords, to whose demands she has now capitulated.

She is just a decoration on the old military juggernaut which is still in power. Hence the rise of the vigilante gangs, the return of the death squads, etc.

Many members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) feel that such repression would have been impossible but for the mistakes of their leaders.

Militant talks to Pete and Gary, two leading activists of the Marxist opposition in the CPP.

Gary: I have been underground for seven years, since I was 16. I led a strike in my technical college. Thousands of students came out. I was put on the police wanted list and went on the run. Finally I was caught. They gave me the full treatment in jail, electric torture and all.

On my release, I became a courier of Party literature. I never knew the pleasures of youth!

It is painful to visit my parents and see their poverty. My mother asked me: "Are you still my son?" I had to tell her I am now a son of the whole working class.

In 1985 I came out against the Party leadership's line. Now all my comrades support my ideas.

Pete: I was jailed in 1970, at the age of 16. I was tortured. Ever since then I have been a full-time activist.

The Party pays me ten pesos a month (one penny per day!), which covers my toothpaste and the odd cigarette. Party sympathisers are expected to feed the fulltimers.

Some days we don't eat at all. We go everywhere on foot.

The Party was wrong to stand aside from the demonstrations and general strikes in Metro Manila from 1983 to 1986. It boycotted the elections which led to the overthrow of Marcos. After Cory came to power, it could not decide what to do.

Gary: The Party has not based itself on the industrial power of the working class.

In 1986-7 there was a big strike wave, culminating in the successful general strikes in August and October 1987 against fuel price hikes and for wage rises. These were led by the KMU, the CPP-affiliated union.

They took place at the height of the coup scare. Yet no attempt was made to mobilise the workers in defence of democratic rights, as a warning to the rebel colonels.

In fact, KMU tactics during the October strike were so adventurist—calling out its members on

a one-week protest strike, later extended for a second week!—that it was suspected of deliberate 'destabilisation' and provocation to the colonels.

People thought the CPP leaders found this period so confusing that they would welcome the return of an open dictatorship, because it would seem to justify their exclusively military approach to the revolution.

As a result, the Left is hardly a factor in politics today. Three times last month the CPP tried to call the workers out on demonstrations. They couldn't mobilise even 1,000 people!

Guerrillism

Pete: The CPP was founded in 1969 on the basis of Maoist illusions in guerrilla struggle. It made meteoric progress. The New People's Army, led by the CPP, grew from a few dozen to about 24,000 today.

But during its military successes it became practically depoliticised. That is why it could play no direct part in the mass movement that overthrew Marcos.

This loss of political feel has led to terrible setbacks even in the countryside. The central leadership has little control over the local NPA units, who are scattered in their own islands. They don't have the political authority to stop the tendency towards banditry.

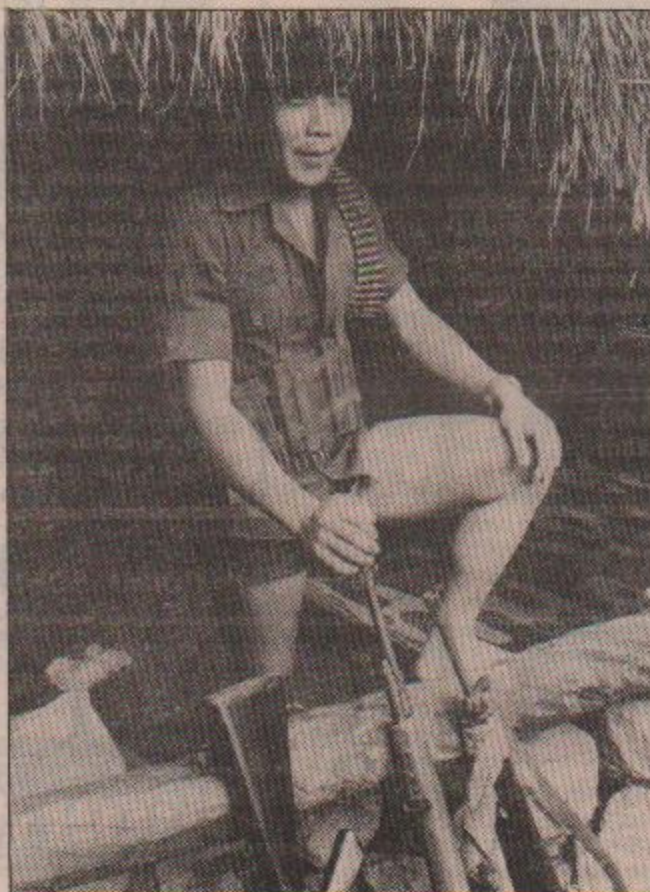
Where the NPA get a strong base—Mindanao is a good example—they become trigger-happy: extorting 'taxes' from peasants as well as landlords, shooting suspected informers in front of their families, executing the village drunk to 'restore discipline'. So they lose support.

That is how the vigilantes got a foothold in Davao and elsewhere. They even got control of the slum city Agdao, which had previously been nicknamed 'Nicaragdao'!

In Bicol the NPA blew up the bridges and isolated the island, causing economic devastation. In



Workers march against Marcos, showing their mass power in the streets. (Below) NPA guerilla in the hills.



Pampanga they killed some American GIs from Clark Air Base, which led to the GIs' confinement to barracks and a slump in local business. These tactics weaken their mass base.

Such is the military fetishism of the CPP leaders that they see the class struggle as just an auxiliary to the guerrilla war. KMU militants are uprooted from their factories and sent to the hills to train as guerrillas.

Now the NPA has set up an urban guerrilla army, the Alex Boncayao Brigade (popularly known as the 'Sparrows'). Ironically, Boncayao was himself a militant trade-union leader who had the support of thousands of workers. He went underground, joined the NPA and died simply a guerrilla.

Gary: The present emphasis on urban guerrillism is a dangerous mistake. Every day the ABB shoot a soldier or policeman. The NPA have done nothing to try to win over the rank-and-file

soldiers. In that sense they are not even good Maoists!

This brings down savage repression on the heads of the workers and the poor, who suffer 'zoning' and 'saturation drives' in the search for Sparrows. A slum area is besieged by a cordon of troops, and a reign of terror inflicted on the inhabitants.

Hooded informers are being used—for the first time since the Japanese occupation—to pick out suspected 'terrorists'. Armed vigilante gangs are springing up everywhere. They are a deadly threat to trade-unionists.

Death squads

The death squads of the Marcos era are back. The police openly agitate for the killing of prominent CPP sympathisers. The bodies of scores of left activists have turned up, with their eyes gouged out, ears chopped off, and other horrible mutilations.

The tactics of the ABB open the way to state terror

against the working class. A comrade of mine was arrested by CapCom (Metro Manila paramilitary police) and summarily executed.

They suspended him from a flagpole and shot him dead with an Armalite, screaming at witnesses that "that is what happens to Sparrows". Actually he was critical of the Party's guerrilla emphasis.

Another friend, a trade-union organiser, was recently ambushed in the street in broad daylight and shot dead by a boss's hired thug, pretending to be a Sparrow.

The urban masses don't feel they owe any loyalty to the Sparrows. They blame them for the repression. So the ABB comrades themselves feel endangered by the Party's obsession with the 'armed struggle' at the expense of political work. They feel deprived of the mass base any guerrilla army needs.

leaders' only answer to dissent. Two opposition leaders in my area, lifelong Party workers, were recently framed up as police agents and executed by the NPA.

This led to a furious revolt in the Party. One regional committee demanded a discussion with the leadership, threatening otherwise to leave the Party. An NPA squad of 100 or more was sent to disarm them.

Two more comrades—workers' leaders—were killed in the subsequent 'encounter', and several more arrested. I myself am in danger from the Party leadership, as well as from the death squads.

Hit list

Gary: I have been warned several times that I am high on the Party hit-list. So I have to keep in hiding both from the Party and the state.

Tens of thousands of comrades are fighting heroically in the CPP/NPA to free the Philippines from the grip of imperialism. Capitalism and landlordism have nothing to offer. The masses have nowhere else to turn.

When the NPA suffer a setback in one area, they appear somewhere else. If the 'veterans' aged 20 to 30 draw critical conclusions, new teenage youth take their place. That is why, in spite of all their blunders, if the workers don't succeed in taking power first, the NPA will eventually win.

But by these mistakes they risk turning the Philippines into another 'killing fields'. And finally a bureaucratic Stalinist regime would be established.

The workers showed their power when they overthrew Marcos. Alongside the workers of South Korea and the rest of the Asian-Pacific region, we can establish workers' democracy. That is the programme of our group.

*Rebel army colonel.

Every day the ABB guerillas shoot a soldier or policeman. They have done nothing to win over the rank-and-file soldiers.

It's a life-or-death question for them. Many of them support our criticisms. I have even been jokingly called 'the Honasan' of the ABB!

Pete: The mistakes of the Party leadership have led to mass splits all over the archipelago. Prominent former leaders have left the Party and defected to the Right. Others have been captured by the military, probably after tip-offs from their rivals in the leadership.

Bullets are the Party



Official march in East Berlin to commemorate Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, German revolutionary workers' leaders murdered in 1919. A hundred Protestant demonstrators, carrying slogans of Rosa Luxemburg, were arrested—but many were released after two weeks of protests.

Eastern Europe

LAST WEEK, for the first time in Eastern Europe, demonstrations were coordinated on an international scale. This is a major precedent for the future.

In Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, protests were organised simultaneously against the Romanian dictatorship of Ceausescu. In Romania itself, violent protests led by steelworkers exploded last year.

At the same time, thousands of Polish workers demonstrated under the banner of the banned trade union, Solidarity, to show their anger at massive price rises. Living standards will fall by 8 per cent, on top of 4 per cent last year, despite a 20 per cent wage increase.

Meanwhile, hundreds were marching in East Berlin to protest against the jailing of another three human rights activists. Thousands had packed into protest church services the previous weekend. The authorities were forced to make concessions.

In Russia, that same weekend, police had invaded a conference of 60 'informal' intellectual groups (the second in six months). Despite Gorbachev's promises of 'glasnost' (openness), echoed more or less reluctantly by other Stalinist leaders, all the

Protest spreads

regimes of Eastern Europe are frightened that criticism will get out of hand, and turn into workers' struggle.

Their fears are justified. The present ferment among intellectuals is a symptom of the tensions running right through society—in the last analysis, the increasing paralysis of the regimes under pressure from the workers.

The whole of Eastern Europe is a powder-keg of anger against bureaucratic repression and mismanagement of the planned economy. The next period will see the death struggles of Stalinist rule as the big battalions of the workers are pulled into struggle, with workers' democracy and socialism written on their banners.

By George Collins

All the regimes of Eastern Europe are afraid that the intellectuals' criticism will get out of hand and turn into workers' struggle.

What US dollar crisis means

THE END of 1987 saw the dollar at its lowest level since the Second World War. It has slumped 50 per cent in three years, and last year alone was down 23 per cent against the Japanese yen.

The reason for the dollar's fall is the US trade deficit of \$160 billion last year. If the USA is spending that much more on imports than it is getting from exports, then there must be an equivalent flow of dollars out of America to pay for all those imports.

Currencies are 'free-floating', that is to say, their price (in terms of other currencies) is determined on foreign exchange markets by the daily transactions of foreign exchange speculators. A balance of trade deficit in the US will alert these traders to mark the dollar down, whatever governments say or central banks do.

So far the Reagan administration has been able to pay for the flood of imports by jacking up US interest rates to a level 3 per cent higher than Germany or Japan. This attracts money capital to the US, balancing the outflow of dollars which is needed to pay the

import bill.

To see what all this means, take the relationship between the US and Japan. In 1986, US imports from Japan were \$55 billion more than US exports to Japan. In the same year, \$66 billion of Japanese capital flowed into the USA, mainly to buy US government bonds.

So, in effect, the Japanese capitalists have been lending the Reagan government money to buy Japanese goods! Clearly this can't be sustained in the long run.

Curbing its rivals

The falling dollar is a result of this imbalance—but it has also been seized on by US imperialism to try to solve its immediate problems at the expense of the rest of the world.

A weaker dollar will cheapen US products abroad, while making imports more expensive. This is meant to boost US industry, internally and internationally, while curbing its main rivals, Japan and Western Europe. The effects can already be seen.

At current exchange rates it

costs \$542 to produce one tonne of steel in Japan, and \$70 carriage. In the US steel sells for \$475 a tonne. This shows how the US administration is using the dollar's decline to price foreign imports out of the market.

However, it is precisely the free-spending US economy—inflated by Reagan's armaments programme—that has provided an export market for the rest of the world, and helped to fuel the growth of Europe and Japan in recent years. Now, with world slump already impending, that fragile 'boom' is over.

European Airbus says it can no longer compete with America's Boeing, which means thousands of aerospace jobs throughout Europe are at risk. Jaguar shares have slumped as a result of the threat to its lucrative US market.

The capitalists of Europe are fighting back, but there isn't much they can do against the pressure of market forces on the dollar, combined with the interests of the mighty US capitalist class.

The first weeks of this year saw a 'miracle of levitation' as panic-

Nicaragua

Setback for US imperialism

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S request for \$30m (£20m) new aid to the right-wing Contra terrorists in Nicaragua was narrowly defeated in the US Congress on 3 February.

In recent years the US government has officially spent over \$1bn on funding the ex-National Guard of the former Somoza dictatorship—probably far more if private supplies are included.

When the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown in 1979, workers and youth throughout South America were enthused. US capitalism was terrified at the threat of revolution spreading through Central America, with inevitable repercussions within the States itself.

Yet all the money poured in and the 30,000 dead have had no real success. The Contras have not even been able to conquer any territory.

They have used the money to organise business rackets, including drug-trafficking, gun-running and prostitution. Their acts of terrorism have caused economic disruption, but constituted no political challenge to the Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

The Democrats in the US Congress have voted against the latest funding proposal because they see the Contra gangsters as a liability. At the same time Sandinista leader Ortega, by participating in the 'peace plan' sponsored by the various capitalist regimes of Central America, is showing his willingness to keep the revolution in check.

The 'peace plan' is based on the illusion that capitalist democracy can be built in Central America on the basis of economic bankruptcy and mass destitution. With a new world recession looming, the real outlook is one of escalating guerilla war on the land and revolutionary explosions in the cities.

In the end, capitalism has no weapon except renewed military dictatorship to save its rule.

Only a revolutionary appeal to the workers of other countries and the completion of the revolution by the Nicaraguan working class can forestall the designs of both wings of US capitalism on the gains achieved.

By Soraya Lawrence



Contras show off military hardware provided by Reagan.

stricken central banks in Western Europe lashed out between \$3 billion and \$5 billion in one week, buying greenbacks to stop the rot. Since then the dollar has resumed its fall.

Dangers

But, for the US, letting the dollar slide brings dangers of its own. Every plunge in the dollar exchange rate is another step towards recession in Europe and the Far East, and causes another stock exchange tremor. This will eventually rebound back onto the heads of the US capitalists, as world trade and investment is squeezed further.

The counterpart of the US trade deficit is its budget deficit. The Reagan administration is spending \$167 billion more than it is getting in taxes, and must borrow to make up the shortfall.

In three or four years, Reagan will have clocked up net debts of \$1 trillion with the rest of the world!

If he cuts the budget deficit—and President and Congress are deadlocked on this—then hundreds of

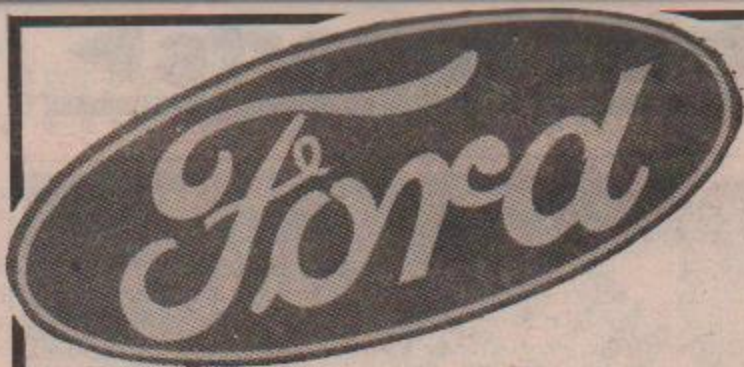
thousands of workers whose jobs depend on government spending would be laid off. The result would be recession.

But, if Reagan is to carry on as the last of the big spenders (on guns, not butter), then the balance-of-payments deficit will continue to escalate. The dollar will keep on falling, and the rest of the world dependent on exporting to the USA will catch recession.

Capital inflow into the US is slowing down. To attract foreign loans to pay the bills, Reagan will have to yank up interest rates. This would strengthen the dollar again, hitting US exports. At home it would choke off investment and demand (consumer credit), triggering a recession.

Either way, the outlook for the US and the world economy is grim. Recession in the USA—over one-fifth of the capitalist world market—means international recession.

By Mick Brooks



Three days at Halewood

Dagenham

"OUR POCKETS are empty, theirs are full. It's time to share out some of the wealth." Dagenham worker lobbying negotiators.

"Kick out Murphy—we're the union." Banner at Dagenham.

"Even if they offer us £20 a week, we wouldn't take it with the strings." Dagenham worker.

Basildon solid

DESPITE A vote of acceptance of the new company offer at the Basildon radiator plant, the strike was solidly supported by the hourly paid workers. At Basildon tractor plant the strike was also solid.

Basildon Labour Party Young Socialist (LPYS) members joined the picket with their banner. The Labour party has made its office facilities available for a strike headquarters and Nalco members have arranged for the Welfare Rights department to give advice to strikers on benefit entitlements.

One of the young pickets at the tractor plant and a member of the LPYS told us: "There has been a good response to the strike. The majority have voted against the three year deal. Everyone is out with no-one crossing the picket line. The company are not offering a decent pay rise when they are making millions of pounds of profit. If Ford workers get a decent pay rise, it might help other unions to fight for more as well."

"With four hours compulsory overtime, I take home £122 per week. If you are off 'without good reason', or are late, you can be fined £8. If you are married with a family you'll be claiming supplementary benefit.

"I am a line worker and start at 7am. The first part of the day is the worst as you work for three hours without a break. The work is boring and monotonous. The line is always moving. You can't stop. You are made to feel guilty if you want to go to the toilet. In the interview they told us that your body will become accustomed to the breaks. During the day you are working at a certain pace and then suddenly the line will speed up. You have to work faster. If you make a cock-up it's pointed out. There's a sheet on the wall with a list of mistakes to make you feel stupid."

"To win, the workers must stand solid, involving all the union members, and including wives and husbands. People can get demoralised by staying indoors and watching TV. They should get involved in picketing. If not, they should be visited and given a strike bulletin. We should get the rest of the labour movement involved. It's better to feel a lot of people behind you. The press will try to isolate us. We should only go back to work with ten per cent plus a one year deal, a shorter working week, better holidays and the full claim."

John McKay spoke to a Basildon tractor plant worker.

WEDNESDAY, EIGHT o'clock—roll call. At nine we all went to the union meeting. The report back from the convenors was received in silence.

The stewards recommended rejection of the offer. Afterwards, everyone walked to the balloting stations. There was no talking but everyone knew they had to vote against.

Thursday. An air of expectancy hung over the plant. Suddenly everyone was listening to the radio for results. As the smaller plants declared first there was a feeling of disappointment but this quickly turned to excitement. It was as if Liverpool and Everton

had won the cup at the same time!

'Here we go!'

Dagenham's result came through. Then our own. We knew the offer had been rejected. On the trim lines some 2000 workers started cheering "Here we go! Here we go!" Workers were hitting whatever they could find to express their enthusiasm.

Friday was a day and a half.

When we got in there were calls for section meetings. One section of 12 met—it voted to go home straight away, upped and left. Management then demanded that we man-up their jobs. This was refused. The rest of the trim then had a meeting and they decided to walk out as well. They were soon joined by workers on the high lines. By midday, the whole operation had stopped.

By a Halewood striker.



Pickets outside the Dagenham plant.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Leamington

"A STRIKE will cripple Ford. Nobody wants it but it's been forced on us by the company's actions."

"They say they want more flexibility. Skilled workers will be working on the line. I'm three and a half years into a four year apprenticeship—why have I bothered? The apprentices have got a no-strike agreement but I'll refuse to work while the strike is on. My message to the blokes is to stick it out and win. If not, it'll be a five year agreement, then a no-strike agreement, then a dictatorship."

"Management have tried to have their cake and eat it—let's hope they choke. They've offered us a great package—with a cyanide pill in it."

"The best article I've seen on Ford was in the *Militant*."

Melanie Storer spoke to a Ford Leamington apprentice.

Halewood

"IT'S AS we expected. Unanimous support by all the workers. No hourly workers at all reported for work on the Halewood site. The feedback is that it's the same throughout the country."

"We hope it's not a long dispute, but regrettably we are prepared for it."

"It's hard to say whether management have dug their heels in. It could be that they are waiting to see if people would adjust to the last ballot decision. Don't forget, it's the second ballot, and once

again they've come out with an overwhelming rejection of the company's offer."

Richie Rowlands, convenor of the PTA at Ford Halewood, spoke to Terry Harrison.

Bridgend

ONE HUNDRED per cent support for the strike was reported from the Bridgend plant. All contractors were turned away and only one delivery got through on Monday. The pickets were keeping a close watch on 1700 engines inside the factory to make sure they didn't 'disappear'.

According to convenor, Andy Richards, "Eighty per cent voted to reject. It's an out and out struggle to win." The mood was best summed up by one picket who said that he was prepared to stay out eight, nine or ten weeks if that was what it required.

By Tony Wedlake.

Southampton

THE LOCAL press have been referring to the 'reluctant strikers' at the Southampton plant, a reference to their vote to accept the last Ford offer. When asked by an interviewer whether this was true, one picket replied, "No, I'm not reluctant, only a bit cold."

In fact, the plant is out on strike solidly. "We voted in favour of the deal, but we'll abide by the majority and we'll stay out until we win," commented another.

By Gavin Marsh.

Seventeen dead in six weeks

"PEOPLE CAN only work so hard and it's getting to a point where they can't do any more."

Jack has worked at the Jaguar car plant in Browns Lane, Coventry for 25 years. He's a shop steward and, at 61, he has seen the impact of management changes in the factory. "The climate seems to be right for them. With so many people on the dole, they think they can do what they like to us."

"Before, they would have floaters on the shop floor to take over if you were sick or if you wanted to go to the toilet. Now, there's nobody spare. Everybody has a job to go to."

"They've speeded up the tracks so I'm doing about twice what I did two years ago—now it pulls a car every four minutes and 45 seconds. And if they want something extra they just expect us to get it

done. Years ago they'd have called us into the office to discuss it first."

"The high pressure of work is taking its toll in the health of the staff. In one six-week period last year no less than 17 shop-floor workers died from illnesses, many of them stress-related, such as strokes."

Opportunities

Jack explained: "In the past the men who were over 60 were taken off the tracks and put on other jobs. But there aren't many of those opportunities left and people are queuing up for them."

He's in no doubt about why the changes have been brought in. "It's all profit motive and they don't care how they get it. People will only take so

much of being treated like children."

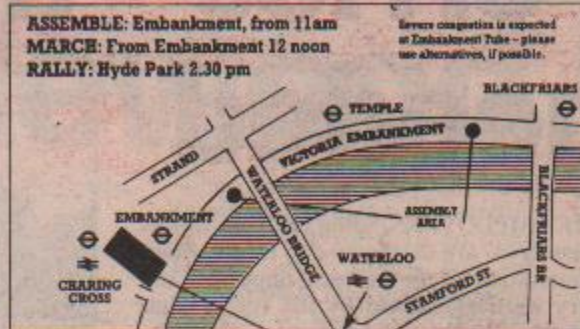
"The lads on nights walked out last week when someone was disciplined. Now they're trying to scare us with letters about redundancies at Porsche." Before Christmas, a strike ballot for one-day action against the closure of a local hospital was lost by a handful of votes. In national action to defend the NHS, there can be no doubt that the Jaguar plant would shut down.

Jack and other delegates from his union branch will be at the BLOC conference, hoping to meet stewards from other car plants and coordinate the battle.

Jack spoke to Sian Rhys.

Militant

Defend the health service



TUC rally 5 March

Ford workers say: WE WILL WIN



Can we trust these people?

THE NATIONAL negotiators called the three year deal a 'unique achievement'. You can say that again! The original acceptance of this shameful deal by the National Joint Negotiating Committee has posed point blank the need for a far greater degree of democratic check by Ford workers upon those who meet the company in negotiations.

lay members, with trade union full time officials only present on request and in an advisory role.

The strategy for running the strike should be firmly in the hands of this elected lay members body nationally supplemented in each area by democratically elected strike committees.

Democratic

There must be no question either of the mood being eroded by constant ballots on slightly altered offers. Before any offer is again put to the workforce for acceptance it should first be ratified by a majority in a national Ford's stewards conference.

The NJNC has been shown to be light years removed from the feelings of ordinary Ford workers on the shop floor. The NJNC should be urgently re-constituted. Ford workers have entered battle. We want a general staff that does not run for cover at the first sign of enemy fire.

This deal has also raised the need for trade union full time officials to be subject to the democratic check of regular elections and to be brought nearer to conditions of the members they serve by receiving only the average wage of a skilled worker, together with any necessary expenses.

Negotiations should be in the hands of Ford workers themselves through their elected shop stewards. Full-time officials should be present only in an advisory capacity.

A conference should be urgently convened of all Ford stewards to elect a new NJNC made up entirely of

A fair deal?

FORD WORKERS will be interested to learn that while they have to strike to improve an offer of seven per cent this year, coupled with an array of attacks on conditions, the directors have awarded themselves a rise of 19 per cent, the chairman, already on over £4000 a week, an increase of 41 per cent and the shareholders a modest 206 per cent boost.

"WE'VE MADE massive profits for Ford over the years. Let's see how much they make without us." This comment from a worker at the Southampton plant sums up the bitterness which exists towards the company's offer.

By a Ford Dagenham TGWU member.

Ford workers are now out-from Halewood to Southampton, from Swansea to Basildon. This strike is not just about money. It's about conditions on the track and the fact that management want to turn the screw several degrees tighter.



Since 1978 we have made a staggering £1,180 million for Ford UK, yet 31,000 jobs have gone in this period. The directors aren't interested in their workforce—they're interested in one thing and one thing alone—jacking up their profits.

the membership involved. Bulletins should be produced to regularly answer the attacks of the management and the Tory press. To involve the families and communities we should launch support groups.

This dispute must be run by the rank and file. It is our jobs and conditions that are at stake. We must elect strike committees at every plant to run the strike. Regular mass meetings must be organised to keep

A lay national negotiating committee must be elected to ensure that the true feelings of the shopfloor are being fought for.

We need the support of dockers and transport workers. Dockers have already promised to block Ford imports from Europe. We welcome this solidarity. Delegations should be sent to Genk, Saarlouis, Col-

ogne and Valencia to win support.

The wider trade union movement has to be approached for support to prevent management using the Tory anti-union laws in this dispute as the ferry owners have.

In the words of one Dagenham maintenance worker: "You tend to take it and take it but we've had enough. If it takes a while to win this strike, we are ready. We're prepared to stick it out to the end."

If we stand firm and win the backing of other workers, we will win.

We must organise:

- ★ Regular mass meetings at all plants.
- ★ Regular bulletins to keep strikers informed.
- ★ An appeal to Ford workers internationally for solidarity support.
- ★ An appeal to dockers and transport workers to block Ford vehicles and components.
- ★ A conference of all Ford stewards to elect a new all lay-member negotiating team.
- Stand firm to win:
- ★ A minimum ten per cent pay increase!
- ★ Annual pay deals!
- ★ A 35 hour week with no loss of pay!
- ★ The full claim!

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What we stand for

- The immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss in pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.
- Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, the health service, etc.
- A minimum wage of £120 a week tied to the cost of living for all, including sick and disabled people.
- A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving the trade unions, shop stewards, the unwaged and small business people.
- Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.
- Workers' management of the nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one-third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one-third from the government.
- Opposition to the Tory government's anti-union laws and reversal of attacks on the trade unions.
- Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust.
- Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.