

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

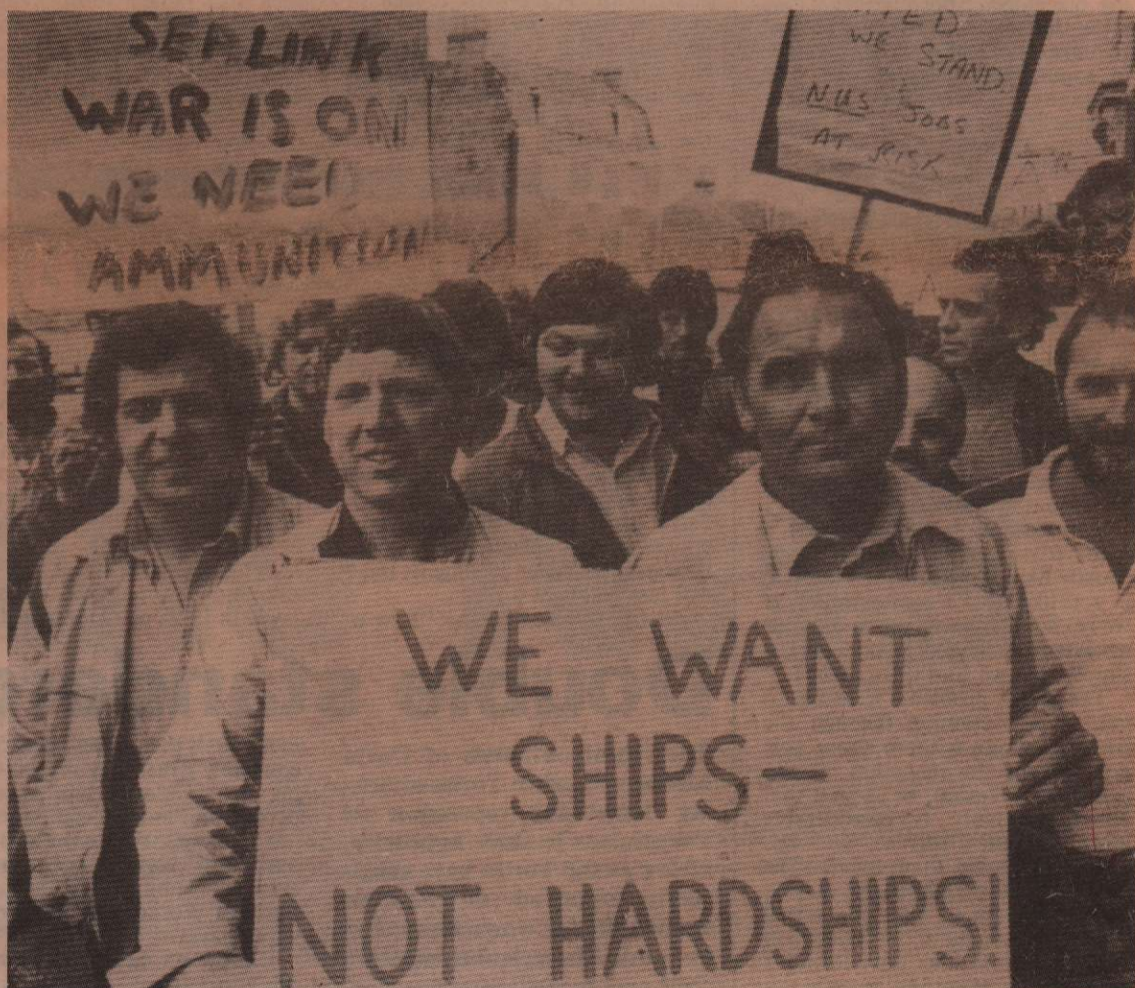
INSIDE

More on the health dispute pages 3-5



Solidarity can win!

Back the seafarers!



The seamen's strike is still on! NUS leader Sam McCluskie has said that the High Court injunctions issued on Tuesday make no difference — the action will go ahead.

Seafarers around the country on Monday night voted 70-80% in favour of immediate, indefinite strike action. The vote was taken in support of 161 sailors in Heysham, employed by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. The Heysham sailors walked out on 29 December over threatened cuts in jobs, pay and leave. The injunctions were granted on the basis that action by P&O and Sealink workers would be secondary action, illegal under the 1982 Employment Act.

Seafarers in eight ports around the country — Harwich, Felixstowe, Oban, Stranraer, Fleetwood,

Belfast, Larne and Holyhead — have already taken action. Sailors in Dover and Hull have taken the dispute into their own hands by occupying vessels so they cannot leave port.

The attacks on the Heysham seafarers are no exception in the ferry industry. P&O also have plans to make redundancies, cut pay and increase hours spent on board. A serious fightback in the industry is long overdue.

Defy

That the NUS executive has so far said it will defy the injunctions is an important step. Across Britain there is a mood of growing militancy, led by the health workers. The NUS must not give in, the strike must continue. Turn the tide — back the seafarers!



Strike for the health workers

The Tories really do want to destroy the National Health Service.

A secret Tory report leaked last week to the Guardian included detailed plans for dismantling the NHS and replacing it with private insurance. Hospitals are to be put under the control of profit-

making companies. As Edwina Currie put it "We are talking about a thumping big growth in the private sector".

To drive through these plans the Tories will have to smash trade unionism in the NHS.

Health workers have no alternative but to fight these attacks and fight them now while there is still an NHS to defend.

The Tories are not invincible, Turn to page 3

WOMAN'S
EYE

My erotica, your porn?

Clare Short has decided to have another go at introducing a Bill in Parliament to ban page 3 pictures. The debate has been had out before in Socialist Organiser around banning pornography/page 3.

I'm against it for two reasons. Firstly, however silly and demeaning page 3 pin-ups are, I don't think banning them would make any difference at all to the position of women. What's the point of dealing with symptoms rather than tackling the root cause?

More importantly, though, I'm against the state having the power to tell anyone what they can and can't look at.

I'm not sure that it isn't worth some sort of serious discussion taking place about pornography. One thing that everyone, be they radical feminist or socialist, seems to have in common is the idea that pornography is a 'bad thing' — the difference lies in the priority it is made in terms of political action or how you deal with it.

But there are enormous problems with this. For some people, any erotic material, material about sex, produced in a society where women are second-class citizens is going to be marked by this — material about sex in our society is more than likely to be sexist.

But is there anything wrong with people reading about sex or looking at pictures? Should we wait until socialism when we will all be terribly 'right on' and when we can produce non-sexist erotica?

Pornography is too often just a name to something we don't personally like. If I like it, it's erotica, if you like it, it's pornography. If we're honest, how much of our distaste for page 3, Playboy, etc., is simply that we find them tacky?

The other problem, it seems to me, is that running through the whole common wisdom about pornography is the idea that women aren't really sexual, or at least that female sexuality is considerably more romantic, diffuse, and less genitally focused than men's. The quite legitimate fight to get men to be more aware of women's sexual needs has brought about a situation where it seems rather poor form for a feminist to admit that occasionally she might just want a nice screw.

An article in a recent Feminist Review attempts to deal with women's relation to pornography differently. Marion Bower argues that "pornography can also produce physical sensations of sexual arousal in women as well as men." Either this is just that women are brainwashed, or we have to look for other reasons.

Bowen uses psychoanalytic theory, investigating early childhood experiences, common to both boy and girl babies, relating this to erotic drives.

Now, I don't know whether all this is right or not, but it's certainly interesting. There are loads of issues surrounding pornography that simply haven't been discussed. We've relied on a simplistic analysis for too long. It would be nice if the Clare Short Bill at least stimulated some real discussion of the issue.

More violence on W. Bank

By Clive Bradley

More people have died in renewed violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. At Anabta, on the morning of February 1, two Palestinian youths, aged 17 and 20, were killed, probably by ultra-right Jewish settlers. A 25-year-old Palestinian woman was rushed to hospital after being shot in the head.

The army continued to impose curfews on various West Bank towns, notably at the largest, Nablus.

Calls to action, and advice on methods of fighting, are put out daily by the Voice of Jerusalem radio — believed to be run, albeit on a non-partisan basis, by a pro-Syrian PLO faction. A 'Unified National Leadership' is believed to have been formed, uniting Yasser Arafat's Fatah, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front, the Palestinian Communist Party and the religious-fundamentalist Islamic Jihad.

So there does seem to be some link between the violent protests of the youth and actual political organisation, although how close the link it is hard to say.

Comparisons with South Africa have leapt to many people's minds, and it is not necessary to hold an analysis of Israel as a replica of apartheid to see the similarities. The current revolt bears a striking resemblance to the 'ungovernability' strategy employed in South African black townships at the peak of the unrest there. A com-



Protesters picketed the Israeli Embassy in London last Thursday, 28th, to condemn the repression in the West Bank and Gaza. Photo: Ian Swindale.

mercial strike has remained in force since early December, probably involving a higher degree of mobilisation than South African boycott campaigns.

But does the current uprising suffer from the same weaknesses as the 'ungovernability' strategy in South Africa? There it proved impossible to topple apartheid through boycotts alone; a more immediate focus for demands was necessary than simply the maximum 'down with apartheid'. Moreover, 'ungovernability' was linked to the external diplomatic strategy of the African National Congress: it was seen as a radical form of pressure from below to push P.W. Botha to the negotiating table. For the PLO, too, the uprising provides above all a diplomatic opportunity. And whilst there is nothing wrong in principle with diplomacy, there

could be dangers if the uprising is subordinated to diplomatic efforts.

There are big differences between Palestine and South Africa. 'Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza' is a slogan with no South African equivalent. The call for Israel to get out of the occupied territories is more or less like any call for national independence.

But there are big obstacles to Israeli withdrawal. The official Israeli army (the so-called Defence Force) is immensely powerful. As recent events have shown, paramilitary far-right settler groups pose an extra problem. There are 70,000 such settlers in the West Bank in 118 settlements (plus 2,500 at 18 settlements in Gaza). And these are all fanatics.

Successive Israeli governments have given backing to the settlements projects as a form of

'creeping annexation'. Even if this or any future government decides to get out, the settlers will fight to stay — and they are well-armed and determined.

The general drift of Israeli public opinion is to the right, particularly among the most dispossessed sections of Israeli Jewish society.

The stronger the Palestinian movement is now, the better any results from an international conference will be. But international negotiations are no substitute for building Arab-Jewish unity at grassroots level. That is a difficult task — but probably an essential one if a Palestinian state is to be achieved.

The other lesson from South Africa is the necessity for a working class movement to lead the revolt. So far, the Palestinian trade union movement has yet to put its own mark on the uprising.

Letters

No self-determination for Jews!

I am writing in response to the recent SO articles on Israel and the Palestinians in the issues of 10 December and 14 January.

I must say that I am disappointed that a socialist paper can write such drivel on such an important political issue. There were many weaknesses in your arguments but I will just highlight a few.

Firstly, to say that the "Law of

Return is not in itself racist" is the height of absurdity. It is like saying that Britain's immigration laws (which I'm sure you oppose) are not racist because they are not explicitly so. However, anybody with some sense knows that this is certainly not the case because the implications of the laws are to discriminate against black people.

Similarly, with Israel one has to examine the political context of laws. In 1948, up to 700,000 Palesti-

nians were driven from their homes and forced to flee to neighbouring countries. However, with the formation of Israel, only Jews were allowed to immigrate. Arabs within the Jewish state are treated as second-class citizens in many spheres of life.

The second point is your call for the self-determination of all the peoples in the region, including the Jews.

This is a ridiculous position because socialists support the self-determination of oppressed nationalities. The Jews are not in this position. (Read Lenin's writings on the national question).

I am afraid that SO seems to share the Zionist obsession about being engulfed by the surrounding Arab states. For example, the SSIN motion (a real hodge-podge of ideas) says in Paragraph 11 ("The Israeli Jews are a nation and therefore have national rights, i.e. the right not to be incorporated into an Arab state against their will").

Apart from being such a vague motion, it seems to imply that the

Arabs will impose their state on the Jews.

Finally, another flaw in your argument is the proposal to have an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Apart from being economically non-viable, it evades the central issue. Who would control it politically? Just like South Africa dominates the region with its military might, so does Israel. The reactionary Arab states also would do everything in their power to prevent a progressive Palestinian movement coming to power as it would threaten their interests.

In the long term (and this is where SO is correct) only a socialist federation in the Middle East could bring an end to the region's intractable problems. However, in the short term full support must be given to the Palestinians and an appeal must be made to Jewish workers to support their Arab brothers and sisters. Surely this is not utopian.

TONY TRAUB
Leigh-on-Sea

Double standards

The recent outbursts of David Mellor and other Tories attacking Israel for repression of Palestinians is sheer hypocrisy, seeing as the Tories have steadfastly opposed any action against the far worse repression in South Africa, not to mention their own brutal repression during the miners' strike.

And when have the Tories ever cared about the plight of the Palestinians anyway?

The Tories are very selective in their attitude towards repression, ferociously condemning some regimes that practise it, while unconditionally (and financially) supporting others.

While everyone from the Tories to various Trotskyists seems to unite in condemning Israel, the equally bad and sometimes worse treatment the Palestinians receive at the hands of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries is ignored.

This is to be expected from Thatcher, who cares nothing for human rights, and won't criticise brutal Arab regimes because they control the oil. But it is an indictment of certain left wing organisations and

individuals that in their eagerness to condemn Israel they are quite willing to overlook repression and persecution in her neighbours.

Sometimes this eagerness spills over into blatant distortion and even anti-semitism, for example in Socialist Worker of 9 January 1988 which says:

"...how on earth can one set of concentration camps justify another? Concentration camps are precisely what are being built in Gaza and the West Bank this very moment by the so-called victims of persecution."

This statement is misleading and dishonest, equating the Palestinian refugee camps with Nazi concentration camps, gas chambers and mass crematoria.

And what is meant by "so called victims of persecution"?

While socialists have a duty to condemn the repression of Palestinians by the Israeli government they should not ignore the repression that takes place throughout the Middle East. It is their duty to put forward a socialist solution, recognising the rights of Jews and Arabs alike, and not aping the hypocrisy, distortion and anti-semitism of the Tory Party.

Yours faithfully,
ALISA ROMMER

STOP EXPULSIONS!

Last week's Labour Party National Executive Committee agreed to investigate Militant 'infiltration' of Bermondsey Labour Party, and voted for charges to be drawn up against eight members of Bradford North Party, and one of Leeds West. Only four NEC members voted against these measures.

The NEC decision is the latest stage in Neil Kinnock's 'get tough' policy. 50 Militant supporters or alleged supporters have now been expelled from the Labour Party. Not counting Bermondsey, 51 Party

members are under investigation or due to be.

So Kinnock is tightening the screws, and the left is in a bad shape to resist it. But resistance is possible. The Kinnockites must not be allowed to trample on all opposition in the Party. Look at their pathetic showing over the health workers' action: a Kinnockite Labour Party that can't unambiguously support the health workers would be unlikely ever to support anybody.

We need a united campaign against the witch-hunt. The Labour Party must be an open, democratic forum for discussion and political action. No to expulsions!



Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Saving the NHS

From page 1

they can be beaten, they can be forced to retreat. The Manchester nurses and the blood transfusion workers showed that.

Strike action can win. The response to the call for action on 3 February shows the will to fight is still there amongst health workers despite 8½ years of Tory rule.

What is needed now is to draw together and focus the anger of health workers against the Tories and in defence of the NHS.

The various struggles up and down the country over pay, conditions, victimisations and privatisation need to be fused together into a planned national campaign of action in defence of the NHS.

The health unions must call a national shop stewards' conference to work out, plan and control such a campaign of action.

If the union leaders won't then the rank and file shop stewards' committees should.

The broad labour movement must rally to the health workers.

Already the Scottish TUC, defying the Tory anti-union laws, has called for a 24-hour all-out strike by all health workers on 24 February and called on other workers to back the action. This should be extended to a formal call for a 24

hour general strike in defence of the NHS.

The TUC should call a one-day general strike on budget day, 15 March. Such an action would give real meaning to Neil Kinnock's call to make budget day NHS day.

The campaign for a one-day national strike should be used to prepare the ground for more sustained action, to boost confidence and morale.

It is vital that the anger and will to fight of health workers is clearly focused and not allowed to peter out.

In the 1982 hospital workers' dispute, the unions called repeated one-, two- and three-day strikes, with no clear perception of where they were going. The repeated strikes slowly defused the militancy of the workers — organising repeated one or two day strikes is more difficult in many ways than organising an all-out strike. And the experience of constant sacrifice of time and money — seemingly with no

result — is demoralising. Therefore, many activists from 1982 are wary of one-day strikes. However at this stage a one-day all-out strike would not have this effect: it would provide a massive boost.

Right now, a massive wave of working class industrial anger is building up against the Tories. Seafarers and the pit deputies are already involved in strike action. CPSA members are set to ballot for all-out action in the DHSS.

We need to link up the struggles into a general offensive against the Tories.

Thatcher can be beaten. In 1982 millions of workers were prepared to strike for the health workers, but that solidarity was wasted by the union leaders who delayed and prevaricated. It doesn't have to be wasted today.

We must show that we want to care for patients, not for profits.

OUR FIGHTING FUND

At the end of January, we have £2128.08 towards our fund target of £10,000 by 31 March.

Money arriving recently included £45 from Will Adams for a sponsored cycle ride and £30 from a fund-raising social in Merseyside. Plans for fund-raising around the country include: a social in Manchester, a sponsored swim in Merseyside, a social in East London, and a jumble sale and a sponsored film in North London.

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

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GRAFFITI



Australia's 200: nothing to celebrate

Demonstration in support of Aborigines held in Manchester last week. Photo: Peter Walsh, Profile.

Costa del Op

Everyone's favourite junior minister, Edwina Cruella DeVille Currie has had another brain-wave about the nation's health. Worried about the state of the NHS? Been on a hospital waiting list for months?

Edwina has the answer — put off that second holiday, don't re-decorate the living room this year, spend the money on an operation instead!

Well, thanks Edwina.

It may come as a shock to Ms Currie, but many of us don't even have one holiday a year, let alone two. Ever wondered if these people live on the same planet as us?

Invisible achievements

Five years ago China's Shandong province was in trouble. Production figures were low, higher authorities were not pleased.

The answer? A new factory — a brick factory to be precise. The factory was an undreamt success, with output increasing monthly. The factory became central to the economic life of the village.

The local party secretary was promoted. And that's where the trouble really started.

It's replacement, naturally eager to witness this miracle of economic

expansion, asked to visit the factory. For days he made inquiries, efforts to find out exactly where this factory was. Then realisation dawned.

The factory had never existed! It was just a clever trick to keep the central authorities off the

local party's back!

Eventually word filtered back to the provincial statistics department. Apparently they still haven't decided to 'close' the factory — it might call into question the credibility of their statistics!

Mysogynist

Film-maker Brian de Palma, known and hated for his penchant for living out his own misogynist fantasies in films like 'Dressed to Kill' has come up with another gem.

His next film is to be

one of the new generation of money-spinners, cashing in on the Vietnam war. Provisionally titled 'Casualties of War', its 'plot' revolves around a US platoon who kidnap, torture, gang-rape and ultimately murder a young Vietnamese woman. Nice.

Ever tactful, de Palma wrote to Refugee Action, a group which counsels Vietnamese refugees in Britain, to ask for help in his quest for an actress willing to play the woman. Not surprisingly, Refugee Action decided not to help. "It's like asking the NSPCC if they can provide a child to be battered on screen" said a Refugee Action representative.

Yuppies before homeless

Westminster City Council are spearheading the Tories' housing privatisation campaign. The Council is selling at 30% discount almost half its housing stock, at a rate of 500 a year. All this when there are 10,000 people on Westminster's housing waiting list, and 670 families in bed and breakfast.

You don't even have to be a tenant to apply to

buy — to have the offer of a job in Westminster is enough.

One area housing office has been visited by a stockbroker who had lost his money in the crash and was looking for ways to recoup quickly. He breezed into the office asking "where is the man who hands out the keys?" Another way for the yuppies to make a killing?

Support the Action round-up

Scotland

By Stan Crooke

Against a background of mounting anger and industrial action on the part of NHS workers in Scotland, the Scottish TUC has called a Day of Action for 24 February in opposition to plans to go ahead with "competitive tendering" (i.e. privatisation) for hospital catering and cleansing services.

Indicative of the mood of NHS staff in Scotland were the strikes and demonstrations staged in Lothian and Strathclyde on 14 and 18 January when ancillary workers and nurses walked out to lobby meetings of the

Lothian and Greater Glasgow Health Boards which were discussing the privatisation of hospital services.

The demonstrations in Edinburgh responded to the Health Board's decisions to go ahead with privatisation with calls for all-out strike action and a spontaneous second demonstration outside the Scottish Office.

The Glasgow demonstration was the biggest Glasgow trade union demonstration (as opposed to STUC demonstration called in Glasgow) for years.

In the Lothians, unofficial strike action continued into the following week at a number of hospitals, as angry health workers walked out in protest at comments by Scottish Health Minister Michael Forsyth to the effect that any workers who had not gone on strike on 14 January must be in favour of privatisation.

Manchester

By Karen Reissman, assistant branch secretary, COHSE, North Manchester Hospital.

In Manchester, health workers are building for a massive strike and demonstration on 19 February in defence of the NHS and against cuts, low pay and privatisation.

Mass meetings in hospitals have been well-attended and produced unanimous support. There is a mood to fight and stop the Tories wrecking the NHS.

Manchester health workers have managed to persuade several large

workplaces to strike in support of them on the day of the demonstration. These include Manchester Council NALGO, a Thameside NUPE branch and a section of the Post Office. Those need to be built on to make 19 February the biggest demonstration Manchester has seen for years, and to force the trade union leadership to call similar coordinated national action.

This strike call has also provided the opportunity for stewards from different District Health Authorities, who have previously limited action to their own area and focussed on their own Health Authorities, to turn the anger more towards central government and the Tories. There is to be a meeting this Friday of all health worker stewards in Manchester.

Hopefully this will not be an isolated event but become a regular meeting. In the absence of any strong leadership from the health worker unions, the TUC and the Labour Party, and in particular their ambivalence towards hospital strikes, the fight will have to be built from the ground.

West Yorkshire

By Pat Murphy

Support for the health workers' one-day strike spread through West Yorkshire this week.

First 800 nurses, members of COHSE at St. James' Hospital, Leeds, voted to strike. Then other health workers at

Hillingbeck and Seacroft hospitals decided to join the action.

All these hospitals, mostly importantly the General Infirmary, were voting on Monday, and all the signs were that they would vote to strike.

At the weekend 1000 nurses from Wakefield voted to support the February action. At the main hospital, the Stanley Royd, 93% of workers voted for strike action.

St. Albans

The industrial action in the St Albans District, over the suspensions of COHSE officers Jane Barclay-Taylor and Doug Landman, reported in last week's Socialist Organiser, is continuing with increased urgency since management sacked Doug on Friday.

An injunction has been taken out against the union to prevent any of its officers entering Hill End Hospital. Jane's case was going to be heard on Friday but has been postponed.

On 3 February there will be strike action in four hospitals in the district, in defence of Doug and Jane and in protest against what is happening in the NHS. This will be followed up with a call for action on Tuesday 9th to coincide with the local health authority meeting. Unions outside of the health sector may support this action.

Management are clearly getting ready to attack any trade unionists who stand up against the run down of the health service. Doug's dismissal obviously contravenes the Whitley Council regulations on pay and conditions which states that employees cannot be dismissed for being trade union officers.

Unless the trade union and labour movement organises to fight such management actions, there won't be a health service left for people to work in or get treated by.

The Wakefield vote was especially important as COHSE officials claimed that their members were being intimidated by Senior Nursing Officers at one major hospital.

Two Senior Officers, RCN members, were threatening nurses with disciplinary action, including the sack, if they took part in Wednesday's strike. COHSE immediately issued a leaflet assuring members that they could take strike action without fear so long as kept to the union's code of practice and provided emergency cover.

The ballot results suggest that the threats have had little effect on the mood of the strikers.

London

Nurses in nearly 40 London hospitals have voted to take industrial action on or around 3 February.

The action is not confined to nurses, however. 10,000 London NALGO health workers have also voted to strike, as have many health branches of NUPE, COHSE and ASTMS. The London Strike Co-ordinating Committee — recognised by COHSE and NUPE — has supported a call for a rally at 2.30 p.m. on 3 February in Trafalgar Square, followed by delegations to visit Downing Street.

As we go to press, workers at Maudsley Hospital in South London are on a 24-hour strike.

Having struck a day before the

A week later, 60 ancillary workers at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary walked out again in order to attend a meeting of Lothian Regional Council, which was discussing a resolution opposing the Lothian Regional Health Board's plans for privatisation and calling for a reversal of its decision.

Such anger and militancy among NHS workers in Scotland are not confined to the Lothians. A 300-strong meeting at the Inverclyde Royal Hospital in Greenock has voted for a rolling programme of industrial action with only two votes against. Ancillary workers at the Woodilee Hospital have staged token walkouts, and catering workers, porters, auxiliary nurses and drivers walked out at Cowgoen hospital in Glasgow after management went back on its word that no pay deductions would be made for attending a union meeting.

Health Service union leaders last week adopted a strategy of a series of 24 hour strikes by workers in different hospitals, instead of strike action of longer duration by small selected groups of workers.

As we go to press, some 30 ancillary workers from Eden Hall Hospital in Musselburgh, East Lothian, and some 400 of the 1,250 workers at the Bangour General and Bangour Village Hospitals (West Lothian) have been involved in 24-hour strikes.

COHSE also plans to lobby private catering firms who have taken part in discussions with Health Boards about tenders for hospital services. The STUC, apart from calling for the day of action on 24 February, is also planning a rally on 5 March in Sterling, the constituency represented by Forsyth.

It is certainly true that selective, short-term strike action can be a tactic for building longer and broader strike action. It is also true that a 24-hour all-out strike can likewise help prepare the way for more extended strike action.

But all the signs are that the current strategy of short, selected strikes and a one-off 24-hour all-out strike (providing emergency cover) is a device to allow steam to be let off rather than directed towards an all-out strike with emergency cover.

The growing militancy of workers in the NHS on the one hand, and the weakness of the strategy being pursued by Scottish trade union leaders on the other, underlines both the possibility and the need for coordination at grass roots level which can fuse with the existing anger into a cohesive movement towards all-out strike action, linked up with NHS workers in the South, and mobilising support from workers outside the NHS.

Birmingham

Nurses and ancillary workers in at least eight hospitals in the West Midlands are set to strike on 3 February. The Birmingham NHS Defence Campaign is organising a march and rally for 5 March while Birmingham Trades Council is calling for solidarity action from all trade unionists on 5 July, the 40th anniversary of the setting-up of the NHS.

big 3 February day of action, the strikers have received a lot of media attention. In the morning Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner visited the picket line, and spoke to the strikers.

The vote for the strike at Maudsley produced an overwhelming majority of 171 to 13. Most of the staff, including the nurses, are in COHSE. They have been supported by the doctors. The workers at Maudsley were in a buoyant and militant mood, with a sustained picket of 30-40 workers. The union has made posters and placards calling for a one-day general strike.

Workers at Maudsley will certainly be prepared to come out again and build upon this action.

health workers!



Strikers at Winnick Quay Hospital. Photo: Peter Walsh.

The Tories' secret plans for the NHS

The Tories' agenda for the NHS became clearer this week. On Thursday the Guardian revealed the existence of a secret report detailing plans for greatly expanding the role of private health care and health insurance companies.

The report was based upon a meeting late last year of the Conservative Medical Society and the Carlton Club — a Tory discussion group. At this meeting, ex-health minister Gerard Vaughan and current junior health minister Lord Skelmersdale met representatives of American and British private health care companies and senior NHS functionaries, including some of the general managers introduced by Sir Roy "Sainsbury's" Griffiths.

The plans include allowing hospitals to opt out of the NHS, in a way similar to the Tories' plans for schools.

Private firms should finance construction of new hospitals, the report continues, and then lease these facilities to the NHS. Tax relief should be used to encourage private health insurance, and people allowed to opt out for life from

By George Davey-Smith

the NHS and not pay that component of their taxes.

The report recommends "retitling the NHS to show that its first 40 years was the end of the beginning" and that "from 1988 onwards a whole new concept of funding and services will take us into the year 2000". To allow these proposals to be put through the "old fashioned" health service unions, COHSE, NUPE and ASTMS need to be replaced by staff associations friendly to management — so the report notes. Obviously dismantling something as close to people's hearts and interests as the NHS involves smashing the trade unions first.

Recent comments by the government show that these are the plans which the Tories want to push through. Thatcher stated that dissatisfaction with the NHS was so great that pre-election pledges not to add any extra health charges would have to be reassessed.

Edwina Currie couldn't restrain her joy as she talked about a "thumping big growth" of the

private sector "the like of which we have never seen in this country before." The review of health care launched by the government will certainly be used to advance the interests of the private sector.

Yet it is difficult to find any sense behind these proposals. Countries with private or mixed public and private health care systems spend much more of their national income on health than does the UK. The civil servants sent to investigate such systems are not impressed by what they see. Medical organisations don't support the proposals — the British Medical Association (not a hotbed of lefties) declared on Monday that the health service should be funded through taxation, not through expanding the private sector.

Naturally the present government is so ideologically blinkered as not to listen to these arguments — everything must bow down to the forward march of the "free" market, and privatisation of health care will become another stick with which to beat the poor. The current industrial action and protests about the collapse of the health service must be turned into a crusade to save the NHS, before it is too late.

RCN in trouble

The Royal College of Nursing has been put in a difficult position by the increasing militancy of nurses.

When nurses in COHSE and NUPE have gone on strike in the past, the RCN nurses have shown no willingness to support them and have happily crossed picket lines. This time it is different.

RCN nurses at St. Thomas's hospital in South London, gathered a petition of its members to demand an emergency general meeting to discuss the "no-strike" clause in the RCN constitution. RCN nurses at some hospitals are going to work to rule next week, and some will respect picket lines despite explicit instructions from their leadership to cross them.

The RCN has announced that it is preparing to ballot its members on whether the no-strike clause should be kept.

Last Wednesday the RCN general

secretary, Trevor Clay, refused to meet Mrs Thatcher without representatives from COHSE and NUPE being present — although the next day he announced he would consider this after meeting John Moore, the Social Services secretary. Clearly the RCN is having to make some concessions to the angry mood of nurses generally. But this shouldn't make us think that it is going to be transformed into a trade union willing to fight for its membership. If the present industrial action in the health service dies down the RCN will return to its old ways. It sees itself as a professional association, interested only in the professional standing of nursing, and not seeing a common interest with other health workers in fighting to save the NHS. Nurses within the RCN should not be fooled into thinking that the RCN will defend them if they join such a fight. Only a real trade union can do that.

Where nurses won

In Australia the nurses' unions are among the most militant and left-wing in the labour movement.

In November/December 1986, nurses in the state of Victoria struck for 50 days and won their demands on pay. It was the biggest strike in Australia for many years.

Nurses walked out of all but critical and emergency wards at 40 hospitals, even in country towns, after voting in rank-and-file secret ballots.

Under Australian labour law, the ACTU (Australian TUC) and the local Trades Hall Council (Trades Council) played a big part in the dispute.

Early in the dispute the Trades Hall Council (THC) executive tried to take control of it — to sell out the nurses. But the THC bureaucrats were defeated when a THC meeting (lobbed by 200 rank and file nurses) rejected the Executive Report for the first time in memory.

The ACTU has been little better, with secretary Simon Crean telling the press that the nurses should return to work. But the nurses forced the ACTU, too, to support them.

What made the difference was a newly-elected militant leadership in the Victoria nurses' union. A strike activist told the Australian monthly *Socialist Fight*:

Every strike meeting has been stronger than the previous one. Other trade unionists should learn from this. Had the membership not been full involved, there is no way in the world they would have stayed as strong.

Every day we had a picket meeting at the union office with members from each picket line to make the decisions. The membership have run this strike. It hasn't been run with the membership just expected to follow.

In the hospitals the picket rotas have been organised by the job reps, but there are membership meetings in the hospitals almost every other day.

Over the past few years both the women's movement and their position as workers have made a big im-

pact on nurses. They are demanding a recognition of their labour — work which is very much in the mould of female labour and has been undervalued.

Support from the rest of the union movement? There's been verbal support from the leadership, practical support from the rank and file. Delegations of nurses have gone out to workplaces, and at building sites and a number of other work sites we've had workers putting \$5 a day from their wages into the strike fund.

All our union officials' pay goes straight into the strike fund. And we've organised benefits — the Theatrical Employees' Union has been very helpful.

Last Friday (12th) waterfront unions had a half-day stoppage to attend our rally. Rank and file building workers in the BWIU voted for 24 hour stoppages to support us, but they didn't happen.

The HEF (the main ancillary workers' union) has scabbed on us, but we've put out literature and material to all our fellow-workers in the hospitals. In some hospitals we have good working relations with rank and file HEF members.

We're demanding withdrawal of the Ministerial decision on State Enrolled Nurses (SENs) doing registered nurses' duties. In fact, though, that decision has been implemented very little.

Quite a few SENs are our members, and they are already on strike. The HEF has changed its line and told its members not to do our duties. In quite a large number of hospitals all the SENs, including non-union members, have held meetings and told management that they will not do extra duties.

Initially we left skeleton cover in all hospitals — one registered nurse on every ward. Then we withdrew that cover except in emergency areas — intensive care, labour wards, casualty units. Most recently cover has been withdrawn in some casualty units and labour wards.

What about emergency cases at those hospitals? They'll have to go somewhere else. Our willingness to provide emergency cover has been abused. There is no way that nurses would have walked out of those areas at the start of the dispute. We were forced into it by government inactivity.

SOCIALIST
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THE HEALTH

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PICKET



DEFEND THE NHS!

Injustice has been done

Jim Denham looks at the press coverage of the case of the 'Birmingham Six'

JUSTICE HAS BEEN DONE! proclaimed the banner headline on the front page of Friday's Express. It referred, of course, to the outcome of the "Birmingham Six" appeal.

According to the Express, "victims of the Birmingham pub bombings were united in one chorus last night after the longest appeal case in British history. Justice has been done, they said."

Like most of the national press, the Express had tracked down various survivors of the bombings and families of those who were killed that night in November 1974. As might be expected they all supported the Appeal Court's decision.

Maureen Lord, who was given the last rites on the night of the bombings said: "nothing will ever convince me these men did not do it. The whole appeal case was just a terrible waste of money."

Ivy Roberts, whose daughter was killed, said: "People seem to have forgotten the victims and their families. For us the grief is never ending. After something like that you lose all interest in life. By now I would have expected Maureen to be married and I would have had grandchildren. Now I can sleep easy in my bed tonight. Justice has been done."

I'm sure that the Express accurately reported the words and feelings of Maureen Lord and Ivy Roberts. And it may well be that their reactions do represent the majority view of those whose lives were shattered by the bombs. But it

was not simply one "united chorus."

The Birmingham 'Daily News' told a rather different story: "Relatives of the dead and other victims of the night of horror have spoken of their feelings, often mixed, as they heard the news that the appeal had been lost. For some, doubts still exist as to the guilt of the six men."

"Steve Pool, who was injured in the Mulberry Bush explosion, told the Daily News, 'if they're guilty, the right men, then it was the right decision. But I'm surprised they disallowed a retrial — the World in Action programme and the new evidence has certainly put doubts in my mind...I did wonder because of the amount of anti-Irish feeling, whether they just got the first people they could.'"

Marie McArdle, who suffered head and neck injuries and who saw several of her friends killed that night, also expressed doubts: "I would like to think justice has been done, but it is strange that a lot of people keep saying they are innocent." Douglas Smith-Blain whose daughter, then 16, suffered terrible injuries, probably summed up the feelings of most Birmingham people when he told the Daily News, "We wouldn't know what to think about it — I just hope they got the right people, that's all."

Drives

The Birmingham Post and its sister paper the Evening Mail also gave much prominence to those who doubt the guilt of the six (the Post's headline on Friday was "Outrage as pub bombers' appeal turned down") although both papers gave editorial support to the judges.

None of this, of course, proves anything one way or the other. The emotions of the victims of that

outrage 14 years ago may make good copy but in truth we all know that they are no better placed to judge the guilt or innocence of the six than the rest of us. What is of significance is that in Birmingham — where demands for vengeance and feelings of bitterness would be

most understandable — the local press has reflected far more disquiet and unhappiness about the outcome at the Appeal Court, than the nationals. And as a denizen of the Second City myself, I can tell you that on this issue the local rags are an accurate barometer of the feel-

ings of the Brummie on the Outer Circle bus. We don't know for sure, but we're not happy about it. Meanwhile, six men who most of us, at least, don't believe to be guilty "beyond reasonable doubt" look like spending the rest of their lives in jail.

Get the truth on 'shoot-to-kill'!

By Paddy Dollard

THE BRITISH Government has decided that those who ran and covered for the Royal Ulster Constabulary's roving killer squads will not be brought to justice.

The killer squads gunned down a number of unarmed Republicans in 1982, and also shot dead Michael Tighe, a non-political youth. When the deputy Chief Constable of Manchester, John Stalker, took too seriously his job as head of an official police inquiry, he was removed and his career ruined.

The Stalker affair showed the way things were going. The Government's decision to keep secret the results of the inquiry — continued after Stalker's removal by Colin Sampson — and not to prosecute is the Establishment's way of announcing that the cover-up is complete.

The labour movement must demand that the results of the inquiry into the RUC killer squads are published. Those leading RUC officers responsible for multiple murder should be prosecuted and brought to justice.

The Government has decided that 'the rule of law' in Northern Ireland ranks lower than the risks of purging the RUC's top ranks and damaging its morale, which has already been shaken by the mass opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in their own Protestant community. This decision has put great pressure on the two-year-old Agreement.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is a



solemn international treaty between London and Dublin to work together to run Northern Ireland. Britain retains direct control, but is contracted to consult Dublin on everything important. Dublin was not consulted over the decision not to prosecute.

The present Irish Prime Minister, Charles J. Haughey, initially opposed the Agreement but now supports it, partly in response to US pressure. Since the Agreement, collaboration between the police on both sides of the Border has increased in quantity and effectiveness. 50,000 houses were raided in the South recently in a drive against the IRA.

Many in the governing party, Fianna

Fail, now feel that their scepticism or hostility towards the Agreement has been justified. The British court decision on the Birmingham Six has been an additional blow to the credibility of those in Dublin who advocate working as partners with Britain to contain and eventually solve the Northern Ireland problem.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is far from dead. It is the only thing the two ruling classes have got. The opposition in the Dublin Parliament is firmly committed to it. No less important from Haughey's point of view is the fact that Washington is, too. But the damage to the Agreement's credibility is real and important.

Where women's health comes last

Whatever the motives behind *glasnost*, it has its good points. For instance, there have been revelations recently of the scandalous neglect of health and safety in the Union of "Soviet Socialist" Republics — published in official newspapers!

Any workers' state worthy of the name would take the utmost care to protect its citizens from the hazards of industry and agriculture and the early USSR did just that. Even now, Soviet laws on health and safety are among the strictest in the world.

The trouble is that the bureaucracy has no interest in enforcing them and the trade unions, being merely puppets of the state, do nothing either.



This situation was the spur to the attempted formation of free trade unions in the USSR when Vladimir Klebanov tried to do something about the health and safety of Ukrainian miners.

But, while Klebanov found himself in a "psychiatric" prison for his pains, the relaxation of censorship under *glasnost* has allowed the publication of details of the plight of at least some workers in official journals.

In one report, detailed by the Guardian's Moscow correspondent

Martin Walker, the terrible conditions suffered by the women workers of the Ivanovo textile complex were exposed. This report appeared in *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya*, an organ of the Central Committee of the "Communist" Party.

These, then, are the conditions under which the women work:

"The majority of factories were built before the revolution and underwent practically no modification since. There are no shower rooms, endless queues for the few lavatories. The machines are so noisy that they exceed the legal maximum by dozens of times, hence the occupational disease of chronic hearing loss, which affects 80% of the women. The noise affects the women's nervous system, leads to memory loss and insomnia.

"On average, 4% of women cannot give births healthily but this figure doubles to 8% of textile workers. Their babies weight considerably less than average and many suffer from oxygen deficiency."

But what about the vaunted occupational health schemes? The report says that women don't go to the factory clinics because they know the doctors are under orders to report a regular decrease in the number of industrial accidents and diseases.

What are the trades unions doing then? Apparently, they don't inform their members of the state benefits available for those with occupational diseases.

They also failed to back their members' demands for a reduction in compulsory shift work — despite

proof by sociologists that most teenage crime was committed by children of night-shift mothers. According to the report, trades union officials also discourage the women from reporting illness (as do the managers and doctors).

How can it be that the health of the workers is the lowest priority of "socialist" industry? The report blames this on the pressure on factory management to maximise raw production, whatever the cost. But it is also because, despite the central role of women in industry, they have never had their needs taken into account. For example, "The industrial equipment is not designed for women, even though 51% of them now work in industry. All machine tools are designed for the statistically average male. Women sometimes have to stand on stools to adjust their machines or lie on the machinery to work."

The constitutionally proclaimed equality of the sexes in the USSR in fact boils down to freedom for women to do all sorts of menial manual labour at work and then go home to do a full complement of housework.

However, these revelations of *glasnost* are not part of a campaign for real equality. They are actually a contribution to Gorbilimov's national debate on "what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission" (1).

Behind this lies *perestroika* — the need for speed-up and increased productivity alongside cuts in wage costs and staffing levels. What better way than to send women back into the home "for their own protection" where they can always aspire to the status of "Heroine Mother of the Soviet Union" by having ten or more children!

'Profits first' will kill more people

Jean Lane looks at the inquiry into the Kings Cross disaster

The three month investigation into the Kings Cross fire which killed 31 people began on Monday.

Some of the evidence being given to the investigation will be about the cleaning and maintenance work which has been cut or put out to private tender by London Underground Ltd (LUL). It will be told that since the cleaning contracts, the first LUL department to be subjected to competition, have been put out to tender:

*staff numbers have been cut

from 402 to 320.

*30 posts have been converted from full-time to part-time.

*the cleaning of an extra hundred stations have been added to the workload of the staff left, due to redundancies.

*contracts to clean over 100 stations have been awarded to outside firms.

As a result, filth is endemic on the underground. It is its usual warped logic, LUL combat this by banning food and drink, rather than by employing more cleaners.

It is the same logic that puts the fares up to solve the overcrowding of trains, rather than to improve the service.

Escalators are now cleaned every week instead of every day as before. The pit in the middle of the track on

deep level stations used to be cleaned every night. Now it is done only when accumulated rubbish makes it necessary. At Kings Cross, cleaners were cut from 14 to 2.5 in order to compete for contracts.

Also, in the last three years, the lifts and escalators maintenance budget has been cut from £11 million to £6 million. As a result of maintenance being tendered out, emergency cover, routine maintenance and cleaning of escalators has been cut. 100 jobs out of the 350 which make up the department have been lost.

Further reductions in cleaning and maintenance staff have been shelved while the investigation into the Kings Cross fire is on, but LUL do not intend to stop the privatisation of the back-up services which

bring no money in.

On the contrary, they are even now talking of selling off whole tube stations that do not make money or of giving them to voluntary groups to run. And, despite the concern and fear that the Kings Cross disaster has caused, London Regional Transport (LRT) are talking of running tube stations which are completely unstaffed. Even LUL management find this idea worrying, but LRT reckon that more passenger alarms and closed circuit TV could meet safety needs.

If they go on with these ideas, more disasters like Kings Cross will happen. We know that what ever the investigation concludes and whatever crocodile tears LRT and LUL shed, their policy of profit first will kill more people.

Smart and dishonest

Jean Lane reviews
'Fatal Attraction'

Sitting here, attempting to write about the film 'Fatal Attraction', it strikes me what a good little cinema-goer I am.

I am a sucker for a good story — especially a weepy — accepting the film-maker's world completely at face value.

I rooted for the character I was supposed to root for (Dan), felt sorry for the unwitting victim (Dan's wife), wept over the child whose world is torn apart by irresponsible adults, and wished the character I was supposed to wish dead, dead (Alex).

Then I left the cinema for the real world where, for instance, the lifts to the apartments of most people I know are used by local drunks as a toilet and anyway are very narrow (in-joke: now you'll have to see the film). And I'm not saying anything about the sink — except that mine would almost certainly have a top-most plate which had once held a very greasy spaghetti bo'agnaise in it.

Life is not as simple as the film-maker's world. Young cinema-goers should get a "say no" campaign in the schools. "if a film-maker offers you a character..."

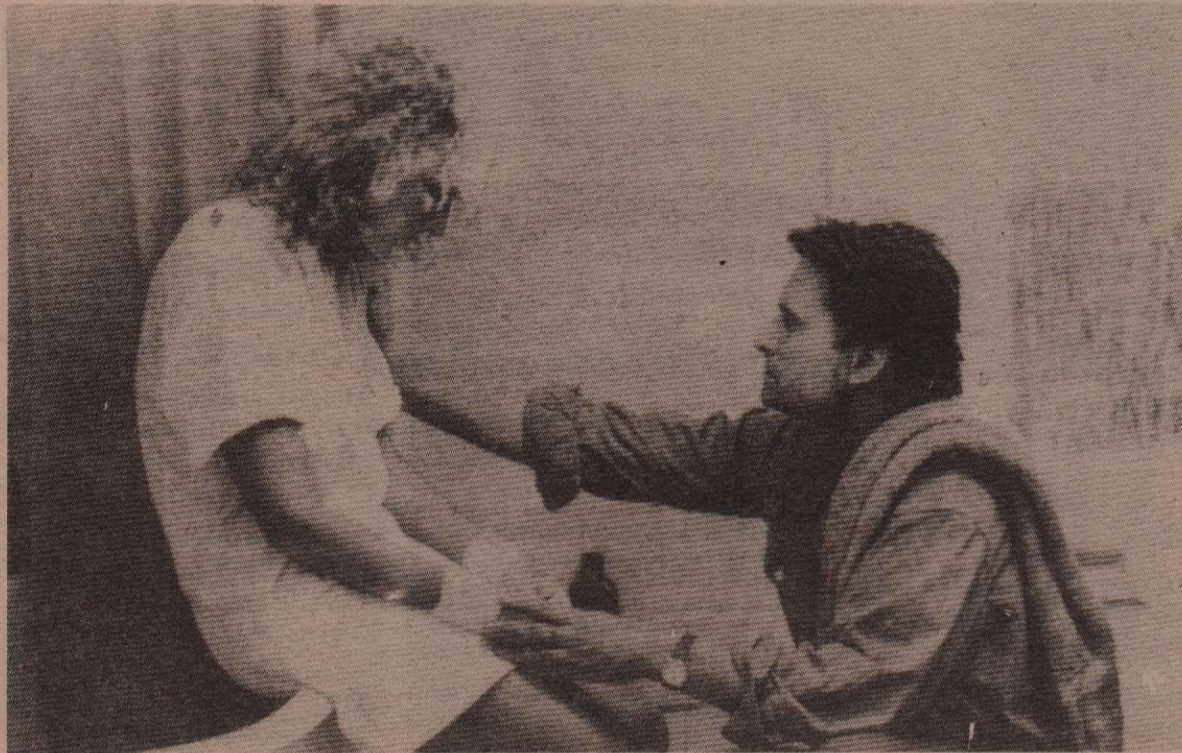
Wealthy

Dan is fortyish, a lawyer for a publishing firm, fairly wealthy and married to a beautiful wife who for the moment has gone off sex. She makes excuses why Dan shouldn't get into bed with her, like allowing their baby daughter to sleep in their bed, or sending him out to take the dog for a walk to cool his ardour down.

Despite this setback, they are an attractive, rich couple with a bright, intelligent and beautiful little girl.

The wife and daughter go away for a weekend and Dan is propositioned by a woman he has met a couple of times at work, Alex. She is about the same age, a single, attractive business woman talented and seemingly independent and easy going. "We are both responsible adults aren't we? I'm alone for the weekend. Your wife and kid are away. Let's have a bit of fun." This is a one-night stand. No strings attached.

We are then shown, via the lift



and the sink, that not only is she independent, single, etc., etc., etc., but she is also very sexually voracious.

The problems, i.e. the strings, start immediately the next day. As soon as Dan attempts to leave for his wife and kid, this talented, easy going etc., etc., etc., woman tries to rip his shirt off, kicks him viciously in the back during a fit of hysterics and then slashes her wrists.

As the film progresses (if 'progress' is the right word), it transpires that Alex is a complete psychotic who follows him and the family around, murders the daughter's pet rabbit, takes the daughter away from the nursery for a frightening ride at a fair ground, issues insults and threats, and eventually turns up in the family's bathroom with a blade prepared to slash anything in sight including herself.

The character Alex is not a real person at all but a male fantasy. I know the directors of this film were a man and a woman. Don't let that fool you. Women have been trying to live up to male fantasies for hundreds of years. The fantasy is that inside every successful, independent, single woman is an hysterical psychotic waiting to get out. She may think she can remain happy-go-lucky and single, but in fact she needs a man and will do anything to

get one.

Dan is portrayed, accurately I think, as a fairly reasonable, even sympathetic man, as men go these days. He was so over the wrist-slashing episode. "Most men would have run a mile," says Alex.

But Dan is not in any way liberated in his attitudes to women. When Alex tells him she's pregnant, the first thing he wants to know is "how do you know it's mine?" and the second thing he wants to know is "you weren't using contraceptives, then?" The thought never occurred to him at the time.

And the next thing he does is offer to pay for the abortion she doesn't want. More or less the behaviour you would expect from most, even so-called liberated men.

Terrible

But Dan is driven on to do terrible things by this totally unreasonable woman. He breaks into her flat when she's not there to check up on her past. He forces his way in when she is there and almost kills her after the rabbit affair. And her character is so awful that you actually feel sympathy for him while he's doing it, (well I did, anyway)

After which, the idyllic family trio put their arms round each

other, safe in the knowledge that the family pulled through against the odds.

The portrayal of Alex is dishonest. She is an unreal character for whom it is almost impossible to feel sympathy, and who is used by the film to caricature the real and reasonable demands that women make on men in sexual relationships and knock them down with the full sympathy of the whole cinema audience. She is a straw woman.

The message of the film is that whatever ups and downs you encounter within marriage, it is at least stable and better than anything you may encounter outside of it. Women who indulge in extra-marital sex may seem to be free, desirable and exciting, but actually they are unhappy, unstable and downright destructive — so beware.

The film is well worth going to see whether you are like one of Pavlov's dogs who drools when told to drool or whether you can analyse while standing on your head. It is action packed, funny, sad and tragic.

But remember, 'Fatal Attraction' is a cautionary tale. It has a moral to suit the times: the times of conservatism, Victorian values and the submissive wife. The effects of these values on women have no attraction at all, but are just plain fatal.



Raymond Williams: a committed socialist

By Stuart Sutherland

The well-known socialist writer Raymond Williams died suddenly last week.

He came from a working class home in Gwent, studied at Cambridge University, and after ten years with the Workers' Educational Association, returned to Cambridge and a distinguished career.

Yet Williams was always deeply at odds with that academic culture, not only by background, but by his intellectual commitment. While the educational system likes to divide the world up into distinct, enclosed categories, Williams always refused to respect these divisions. He stressed the close connections between culture and politics.

Books such as 'Culture and Society', 'The Long Revolution' and 'The Country and the Town' viewed British cultural history as being shaped by bitter struggles within society. In much of his work there was a deep respect for political militancy. At other times there were explorations of the possibility of the labour movement having its own cultural and educational facilities.

His books are too widely read and he was too committed to be labelled an academic; Raymond Williams was a socialist who we should remember and read.

Words that cut deep into racism

James Baldwin, who died recently, was the son of a Harlem minister, the eldest of nine children. In his early years, he too was a preacher. He left the church after a 'crisis of faith' and began writing.

In the early 1950s he moved to Paris, and it was there that he completed his first, and largely autobiographical novel, 'Go Tell It On The Mountain'.

Returning to America with a growing reputation as a writer, he toured the country, reporting, lecturing and debating on the "Negro Problem" and the Civil Rights movement. Anyone who has been watching the "Eyes on the Prize" documentaries should read Baldwin's essays of that period — in 'Nobody Knows My Name' and 'The Fire Next Time'. His words cut deeper than any pictures can, and convey a passion, a rage, that few other writers can match.

A constant theme throughout Baldwin's work is that love and fear govern our lives; that love is "the only human possibility". The world that Baldwin saw was one filled

By Nick Taynton

with people frightened of love and frightened, therefore, of life itself. As protection, they surround themselves with material possessions, insulate themselves with faith. They express their fear with hate; Baldwin said he left America with a feeling of terror, because he was despised by the whites.

The grandson of a slave, Baldwin knew the reality and the history of American racism; from abuse in his own streets, to the lynching parties in the South. His view of racism was uncompromising; he saw it clearly as an expression of power, "a way of avoiding history. I had to be black to justify my slavery. What we call racial prejudice is simply a matter of the most abject cowardice."

Baldwin faced further persecution for his homosexuality. His stories — particularly 'Giovanni's Room' and 'Another Country' — often centred on a man's struggle to find love in a hostile world.

Most of his writings have been recently republished, and his play

'Amen Corner' was revived in London last year. In his later years, James Baldwin did not enjoy the fame that was his in the sixties and he did not receive the credit due to a writer of his scope and stature (he was never given any of the major American literary awards).

The failure of the Civil Rights movement to achieve any real change in America devastated him, and "something in me died" when Martin Luther King was assassinated. Yet he never gave in to despair; from the terror and the hatred all around him, Baldwin had the grace to hold on to hope in the face of tragedy.

"Life is tragic simply because the earth turns and the sun inexorably rises and sets and, one day, for each of us, the sun will go down for the last, last time. Perhaps the whole root of our trouble, the human trouble, is that we will sacrifice all the beauty of our lives, will imprison ourselves in totems, taboos, crosses, blood sacrifices, steeples, mosques, races, armies, flags, nations, in order to deny the fact of death, which is the only fact we have.

"It seems to me that one ought to



rejoice in the fact of death — ought to decide, indeed, to earn one's death by confronting with passion the conundrum of life. One is responsible to life; it is the small beacon in that terrifying darkness from which we come, and to which we shall return. One must negotiate this passage as nobly as possible, for the sake of those coming after us."

James Baldwin died at his home in the South of France, on 1 December 1987.

Organising for socialism



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WHETTON'S WEEK

Back Benn!

On Monday 1 February the pit deputies' union NACODS held a 24-hour strike for an improved pay offer. They already had an overtime ban on.

At last they appear to be using some of the industrial power they have. The relationship between the NUM and NACODS since the strike has not been very good in Notts, but I am sure that our members would respect any picket line and refuse to go into any pit where management has got somebody else to do the pit deputies' job. Already the scab UDM has threatened to break the NACODS strike.

NACODS is just one of a number of groups of workers prepared to take action now: the seafarers, the nurses... I think if the Labour and trade union leadership handle this situation right, then we could see the downfall of the Thatcher government. But only four members of the Labour Party NEC voted to support the nurses' action! And the TUC having called its day of solidarity action on a Saturday is doing the same thing.

I am sure that mineworkers will be on picket lines on Wednesday with the nurses taking action. They will be showing their solidarity to the nurses and ancillary workers and to the idea of a National Health Service. We did it before in 1982, and we will do it again.

Kinnock and Hattersley have been a disaster — the opposite of the 'dream ticket' we were promised. I was at an NUM school over the weekend, involving representatives from all the Notts pits, which was addressed by both Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner. We listened to what Tony Benn had to say and, after a full debate, there was a unanimous view that the present leadership of the Labour Party has been a disaster, and that we need a new leadership that can command the respect and support of working class people.

Personally I would like to see Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner standing for the positions, but we will have to wait and see who is prepared to stand.

Kinnock has got to go. There now seems to be much stronger support for that opinion. Kinnock's search for the middle ground, his attempt to please everybody, is no good.

Tomorrow (Tuesday 2nd) the NUM has its special delegate conference in London. I am hoping to be able to lobby it. It will be discussing several important issues, not least of which is the overtime ban in opposition to the discipline code. We cannot back off that fight. Miners now face the sack merely for standing up and even talking about union policy.

There is also the issue of 6-day working. The union must learn the lessons of that system when we had it working in Bevercotes 20 years ago. Instead of talking about approaching British Coal "to sit down and examine 6-day working", some NUM leaders should sit down and talk to Bevercotes miners about their experience of it.

I do not know if the issue of the sacked miners is coming up. But we can be certain about one thing. As long as the union backs off on other issues, there is not a chance that there will be any movement by British Coal on reinstating the sacked men.

The advantage about the delegate conference is that decisions will be taken by those who live through the experience of working for British Coal every day — unlike the vast majority of the NEC, who do not face the threat of the sack every day of their working lives, who are not going to have to put on knee pads on a Saturday or Sunday, who have not had their wage rise withheld in an attempt to beat them into submission.

We are talking about industrial action, but the important thing is that it is planned and coordinated. If it is just guerrilla action, spouting off here, there and everywhere, the members will just get pissed off.

I am sure that if the present overtime ban is escalated to the level that we had for five months before the 1984/5 strike, we could achieve the maximum damage to British Coal and the least damage to our members. It would be the start of the fightback.

I also hope that the leaders in South Wales and Scotland take cognisance of the ballot result for Arthur Scargill — 69% for in Scotland, 61% in South Wales. You cannot elect Scargill with a clear majority and then turn your backs on all the policies he is advocating and defending.



Manchester cuts

By Tony Dale

In their eagerness to get cuts, Manchester City Council's ruling left-wing Labour group have sacrificed their Police Monitoring Unit and have formed an alliance with the old right-wing Labour group around Billy Egerton. This deal became public at the Council meeting on 28 January, which met in the Town Hall behind a heavy police presence.

In December the Council sent in the police to break up an anti-cuts protest organised by Manchester Fightback. This time police and dogs were in position throughout the Town Hall well before the first protesters turned up. About 100 protesters joined the anti-cuts demonstration. At no point was any attempt made to disrupt the meeting.

Some Council employees turning up for work were forced to show proof that they worked in the Town Hall to the police before they were allowed in. People wanting to visit Council departments had to prove they had a "legitimate" reason before being allowed entry by the police.

All this took place beneath a banner declaring that the Council is "Making Manchester More Accessible". Maybe this will now disappear, as did the previous one

which told us that the Council was "Defending Jobs, Improving Services".

In response to the police presence Town Hall Housing Department members of NUPE walked out on strike.

Inside the Council chamber, the new-found Labour unity voted through cuts which propose the loss of 3,750 jobs before March 1989.

The supposedly left-wing Stringer leadership agreed to chop the Police Monitoring Unit, the Police Watch magazine and the Manchester magazine. The Neighbourhood Services proposals are also under review.

Many in the Council unions and the Labour Party had defended the initial decision to make cuts for two reasons — the danger of the old right-wing around Egerton getting back into power, and the idea that initiatives like the Police Monitoring Unit would be protected by the agreement to make cuts!

Inside the unions there is a high level of demoralisation and fatalism over the cuts. But there is also growing discontent over the shabby way the unions are being treated. Only last week the NALGO leadership were threatening industrial action. Threats like these appear hollow now, but they could well turn into a fightback as services decline and jobs are cut.

The Labour Party's support for Stringer may well be further eroded by the deal with Egerton and by this latest use of the police.

Newbattle Abbey

1,000 march to save college

By Stan Crooke

1,000 opponents of the decision of Scottish Secretary of State Malcolm Rifkind to shut down Newbattle Abbey college, the only Scottish adult residential college marched through Edinburgh last Wednesday, 27 January.

Staff and students received notification of the decision to close the college in a letter from the Scottish Education Department in mid-December. There was no advance warning.

The Government claims that the college, which is a residential one for mature students, is no longer needed because there are so many other opportunities for adults to obtain further and higher education, such as Further Education Colleges, the Open College, or the Open University.

But FE colleges do not cater

specifically for adult students, unlike Newbattle Abbey. The Open College hardly exists in Scotland. The Open University has a two-year waiting list.

The final argument from the Scottish Education Department in support of closure is that some 30% of the college intake comes from England. In fact, such is the scarcity of residential adult colleges, Newbattle Abbey is the "local" college for the North of England (and even Northern Ireland). Applications for places regularly outstrip the number available despite the 50% increase in student intake in recent years.

Despite the hollowness of the arguments, Rifkind has declared that money for the college will cease this year and that the college will close next year (the college runs two-year courses).

Students and staff at the college launched their campaign to overturn the Secretary of State's decision as soon as being informed of it. Only four days after the initial announcement a lobby of the Scottish Office was held, and a petition with 2,500 signatures handed in.

The Newbattle Abbey College campaign is appealing for Labour Party and trade union branches to pass resolutions of support, send letters of protest to the Scottish Office, and make a financial donation towards the campaign. Future campaign activities include a number of fund-raising events, a further demonstration in Dalkeith, a national lobby of Parliament, and meetings with the Scottish Education Department.

For further information or to send donations (cheques payable to "The Newbattle Fighting Fund"), contact The Save Newbattle Campaign, c/o Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 3LL, phone 031-663 1921.

Burtons

Reinstate Tricia Jennings!

The "smart" image of the Burtons' chain of clothing shops is beginning to look distinctly tarnished as the campaign for the re-instatement of Tricia Jennings at Burtons' Princes Street stores in Edinburgh gets underway.

Tricia Jennings began working there in April of last year. In September she discovered that she was pregnant and was rushed to hospital with a threatened miscarriage. Burtons' management informed her that there would be no problems about returning to work on her release from hospital.

Tricia Jennings returned on 9 November only to be told that she had been sacked. No reason was given. On the day she returned to work and was sacked, Burtons were advertising for more staff for the shop.

The Burtons store is not unionised,

and the employment of YTS trainees by Burtons makes it even more difficult to win support from within the store's workforce. And since Tricia Jennings had not been working there two years, she cannot take her case to an industrial tribunal.

The defence committee set up in support of her is demanding she gets her job back, full maternity rights, and wages which she has lost as a result of being sacked.

In an attempt to put pressure on management the defence committee is calling for a boycott by customers of Burtons' shops and is holding weekly pickets and leafletting of the Princes Street shop. The first picket, held last week, turned back a considerable number of would-be customers and certainly had management rattled.

For more information about the campaign, contact: Tricia Jennings Defence Committee, c/o Citizens Rights Office, Broughton Street, Edinburgh (031-557 3366).

Councils

"Socialist" redundancies

By Nik Barstow, Assistant Secretary, Islington NALGO, in a personal capacity

Islington looked set to be the first London Labour Council to send out redundancy notices to its workers.

But it has now postponed its plans until a Council meeting at the end of February. However, it is still vying for the honour of being first.

At its Policy Committee meeting on 4 February the Council will vote to send out over 400 statutory redundancy notices in order to scare workers they want to get rid of into taking voluntary redundancy or early retirement.

But the Council's plans aren't going unopposed. Islington NALGO has called a one-day strike on the 4th, which looks set to be a powerful statement to the Council that redundancies, cuts and compulsory re-deployments will be resisted.

Other unions in Islington are opposing the redundancies too — and are holding a joint march and lobby with NALGO on the evening of the meeting. Community support is being built up against cuts plans: the Islington Play Association, teaching unions, and the local Islington Fightback campaign are backing the march and lobby.

Islington Council leader Margaret Hodge has been leading the retreat by the 'left-wing' Labour Councils who have dumped their promises to fight to save jobs and services. But she has gone too far this time: as well as voting for redundancies on the 4th, the Council is planning to vote to double most Council rents in a year!

NALGO has already distributed 40,000 leaflets to tenants declaring the opposition of council workers to this attack on some of Islington's poorest people.

Council workers in Islington are starting a fight that's not just about defending their own interests — they are now the only line of defence for a whole borough. Our own fate is in our hands not in those of councillors, of full time union officials, or Labour's front bench — but at least now we know that the Thatcher government is weak, that we can win.

Teachers

ILTA ballots for strike

By Cheung Siu Ming, ILTA Executive, (in a personal capacity).

NUT members in Inner London have just been balloted for a one-day strike on 9 February, as well as for unspecified extended strikes (with strike pay) against the ILEA budget cuts. Early results show a clear majority willing to fight.

This is the first step needed to take on both the Tory government, as well as the ILEA who have caved in to Baker's demands for cuts of over £140 million.

The Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA), the London NUT leadership, is now pressing the national union

to sanction a series of three-day strikes before and after half-term (the last week in February), along the same lines as Haringey, where such strikes are into their third week.

The political temperature has changed rapidly, with the Tory Party right-wing pressing for outright abolition of ILEA.

This goes beyond their election manifesto merely to allow the London boroughs to opt out of ILEA. The Education Officer of ILEA, William Stubbs, has decided to leave his £41,000 a year job, and will now take on a new job created by the government to run London's Polytechnics and colleges!

The Labour front bench and the NUT national leadership now hope that such a threat will enable them to lead a broad based popular propaganda campaign against the government — some strikes will be sanctioned, but just as a sideshow and to let off some of London members' pent-up anger against the cuts.

The left-dominated ILTA must not allow this to happen. Although previous campaigns to save the ILEA have successfully involved parents and the community, this time the Tories are in such a strong position that the use of industrial action must be central. ILTA must seize some control of this action from the national union. We must remind everyone that the present ILEA has made cuts last year, and will continue to do so while the fight against abolition goes on. These cuts must be resisted at every level, and the national union must be made to support members at school level:

- *refusal to fill any vacant posts.
- *refusal to cover for other absences when supply teachers are used to fill vacancies instead.
- *refusal to take split classes or increase class sizes.

- *calling on ILEA to withdraw their disciplinary letters against members refusing to cover.

- *calling on ILEA to stop harassing head teachers who send children home.
- *calling on ILEA to stop this year's compulsory transfer of teachers.
- *calling on ILEA to reverse the cuts and to take a stand.

- *take immediate strike action in support of any worker victimised by the ILEA for resisting cuts.

Finally, we need to link up with the health workers and other local government workers, because London teachers will face an uphill task if we have to fight on our own.

Demonstrate

Assemble at Temple Place, Embankment, 10 a.m., Tuesday 9 February.

A chance not to miss

By Trudy Saunders, CPSA

Over the next few weeks the CPSA DHSS Section Executive Committee (SEC) will be campaigning for and organising a strike ballot of CPSA members in local offices for strike action from 11 March.

The demands are that Limited Period Appointees (long-term casual workers who have no employment rights) are made permanent, and that there are no cuts in the staffing complement.

The government's tight deadline of 11 April for the completion of the conversion of Supplementary Benefit to Income Support means that local office workers are in a strong position to win these demands. The threat of strike action will put the 11 April deadline in jeopardy.

The DHSS SEC decision to call a strike ballot indicates a U-turn on the part of the 'Militant'-supporting majority on the committee. Socialist Caucus (the left in the CPSA Broad Left, including Socialist Organiser supporters) put pressure on the Militant supporters to back down from their original position of *not* calling for a strike ballot over staffing and conditions in local offices. Socialist Caucus supporters also argued for removal of YTS from the DHSS and the scrapping of the Moody Report to be included in the list of demands, but these were not agreed to.

Instead the SEC will be launching a section-wide campaign against YTS to include all DHSS offices as well as local offices.

This campaign *must* include a strike ballot if the Tories refuse to give in over

YTS.

It is vital that the result of the DHSS Local Office strike ballot is "yes". The DHSS SEC have continually postponed fighting the Tories; firstly over the new social security laws and then over Limited Period Appointees. As a result the threats to CPSA members over staffing and conditions have reached a crucial point.

We must fight now. Every Broad Left

The TUC have rejected CPSA Deputy General Secretary John Macreadie's call for a one day general strike in support of the nurses and the NHS.

If we are to believe that Macreadie's call was more than hot-air then he and the rest of the Broad Left-dominated CPSA National Executive Committee should begin a campaign of support for the NHS workers among CPSA members in the Civil Service.

This should include building up general support among members, keying into local disputes and working towards a national day of action.

supporter must get out to members and argue for a "yes" vote. No one can possibly argue that the time is not right. Workers everywhere in Britain will be feeling uplifted by the action of the Health workers.

The 11 April deadline for Supplementary Benefit conversion is a weapon we can use. We have missed chances in the past. We must not miss this one. Our jobs, conditions and union solidarity are on the line.



Focus in Sheffield

23 CPSA members are on indefinite strike over the imposition of a YTS trainee into the Community Programme department of the Manpower Services Commission head office in Sheffield. This strike at the heart of MSC operations is fast becoming a focal point for CPSA national resistance to YTS.

A mass picket called for 25 January attracted around 100 people throughout the morning. 250 people took part in a 'Jobs for Youth' march and rally last Friday. Strikers leafleted other Department of Employment offices in Shef-

By Ray Ferris

field and spoke at CPSA meetings, winning a half-day strike in their support. Other members at the MSC head office also took part.

Speakers at the rally included a health worker and two CPSA strikers from the Camden dispute (see report this page). Links have been made between Sheffield and London for a joint fight against management attempts to casualise the Civil Service workforce.

The MSC strikers have donated their half-day's strike pay to the London strikers, and some to the Unemployed Centre in Sheffield which has become their strike headquarters.

Management have sent three letters direct to the strikers trying to isolate weaker individuals, without success. They have suggested they will sit out the dispute for three months and cancelled the pay cheques handed out to strikers last week! A partial climbdown was forced with the issue of 60% pay for the first two weeks of the year — i.e. the two weeks before the dispute began.

At a CPSA Broad Left meeting in Sheffield last week there was a discussion on how to escalate the dispute. Some were not impressed with the 'Militant' leadership's proposals of lightning strikes and selective action. This will only dissipate members' militancy unless action is linked to an overall national strategy against casualisation in the Civil Service.

With the DHSS Section Executive Committee's decision last week to call an all-out strike ballot (pushed for by Socialist Caucus supporters), branches in the Department of Employment must put pressure on their Broad Left '84 leaders to link up the Camden and Sheffield disputes and to link up the struggle within the DHSS and Department of Employment sections.

Messages of support should be sent to CPSA Strike Headquarters, SCCAU, 73 West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ.

Escalation in Camden dispute

A strike of London civil servants in the Department of Employment over compulsory transfers is escalating.

The dispute began at 'Camden A' Unemployment Benefit Office (UBO) before Christmas, and has since spread to other UBOs and to Jobcentres. With the decision last week of the DHSS Section Executive to support the blacking of urgent needs payments in the DHSS offices affected, leading to inevitable suspensions by management, the dispute will spill over into DHSS Sections of the Civil Service.

Management sacked 18 casuals in four different Jobcentres and then tried to force workers in UBOs to transfer to the now chronically understaffed

By Vince Brown

Jobcentres. Those who refused to go were threatened with the sack.

Management have tried to split the Jobcentre/UBO workforces by arguing that the UBOs are overstaffed and that the reason Jobcentre workers were under so much pressure was because UBO staff were refusing to help out.

They were clearly surprised by the strength of the strike. The UBO and Jobcentre staff united in one strike committee which meets daily, and they always send one speaker from each department on delegations to meetings or demonstrations. The dispute has of-

ficial backing from both CPSA and the SCPS.

CPSA members are demanding a) only volunteers to be transferred; b) any staff transferred to be replaced by a permanent member of staff.

Both sides are quite clear about the national implications of the dispute for Civil Service staffing. That's why management have sent letters full of lies individually to strikers and why they insist on "management's right to manage without negotiations".

The London strikers have support from claimants on the picket line and have explained how people can claim money off the social services. They are united in this dispute which is gaining in strength and sent two speakers to a rally at the MSC head office in Sheffield where CPSA members are on strike over the introduction of YTS.

This is the way forward — linking up and developing the struggle against casualisation throughout the service.

KEETONS

War of attrition

By Ray Ferris

Engineers at Sheffield's Keeton's plant are still on strike after 18½ months.

The dispute sprang from the unilateral imposition of new manning i.e. "flexible working" agreements by management. These included working on more than one machine, and doing the work of people who had been laid off when orders were low.

When the workers refused these new conditions they were sacked.

Although the dispute is still official, the AEU stopped paying strike pay after 12 months and the strikers rely on collections at local factories and pits. Collections are also run by local Labour Party wards and trade union branches.

27 out of the original 38 strikers continue to man 24 hour, seven-day-a-week pickets, and they have a stall in the town

centre three days a week.

A newsletter appears every six or so weeks and lists the main companies and hauliers who trade with Keetons, urging their boycott.

The strikers also visit picket lines of other local disputes. Their resolve is fuelled by the feeling that this is a test case and will be closely studied by other firms in the industry. Indeed, it has turned into a war of attrition.

In January the manager jibed "I'll see you in 1993" after the break up of a meeting.

He has employed 21 scabs and there appear to be some parallels with the way scabs were treated by management at Wapping. One was sacked for drilling a hole in the wrong place. Two others left to join the firm's main competitor!

The Keetons strikers will continue their fight for reinstatement. Donations and messages of support should be sent to the Keetons Strike Committee, AEU House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield.

Ford: reject sell-out!

By John Bloxam

This Wednesday, 32,500 Ford manual workers have a chance to throw out a sell-out deal agreed between union negotiators and Ford bosses late on Sunday, just 3½ hours before a national official strike in the company was due to begin. A ballot will be held in all Ford's 21 British plants, and the union leaders are recommending acceptance.

Ford management are cock-a-hoop over the deal. In return for a very minor increase in their existing pay offer, they have tied the unions into a three year deal involving radical changes in working conditions. Their original proposals remain intact, with the exception of the introduction of temporary workers onto the tracks to cover peak production periods.

However, Ford almost certainly threw in this last proposal only as a marker for the future, and always planned to withdraw it, as they did on Thursday.

There were few pieces of silver in return — a 7% pay rise this year, followed by inflation plus 2.5% in the next two years until the end of 1990.

Despite the press ballyhoo about the amount, it is peanuts beside the £350 million profit the company will be announcing shortly for the last year. It puts Ford workers *behind* the average increase in earnings, reckoned by the CBI at 8% a year, and ties them into a straitjacket for three years.

The union leaders have swallowed virtually whole the major changes in working conditions the bosses especially wanted — 'quality circles', 'team leaders' and the right to shift skilled workers onto the production lines at will. These measures threaten a major increase in speed-up, and a serious erosion of union organisation on the shop floor. They will be introduced on a plant by plant basis, and thereby increase the damaging divisions that already exist between Ford workers.

The only 'concession' was management's agreement to refer any problems with the implementation of the changes in the different plants to the national negotiating body. To do what, workers might well ask, after the NJNC's latest performance? The bosses have also agreed to talks about harmonising blue and white collar conditions.

The union leaders were signalling as early as last October that they would run for a sell-out rather than take on the company. The union's own claim for a one-year deal, 10% wage rise, shorter working week and no strings, was quickly forgotten, as was last year's TGWU Conference policy outlawing 'quality circles' and the like.

They were clearly frightened by the militancy and anger in the plants, which they have worked hard to defuse. It was they, and not the company, who pushed for the last minute negotiations on Sunday to avoid Monday's strike.

Ford workers on Wednesday are faced with the same basic deal that they have rejected time and again over the last few months. Their recent 88% ballot vote for industrial action against it, and indications that shop stewards in the main plants will be recommending rejection, means that there is a good chance the sell-out deal will be thrown out.

Ford's white collar workers have also not yet settled, and they too have shown a willingness to take action against basically the same deal the manual workers are facing.

Ford workers should throw out this dirty sell-out deal on Wednesday, and immediately start organising for the all-out national strike action that they have overwhelmingly voted for and which will be necessary to defeat the company's latest and most serious attacks. The organisation for such action will have to come clearly from beneath, and remain firmly under the control of the rank and file.

Over the last few days the NJNC have shown all too clearly that they cannot be trusted.

Medics organise

By Ian Prenelle

Medical students throughout London are organising support of the industrial action to be taken by health workers on 3 February.

Students' unions at UCH/Middlesex Hospital, LHMC and St Mary's Hospital have voted to take action, including a boycott of lectures on Wednesday morning, the setting up of strike funds if appropriate and the organisation of medical students to help on pickets of the hospitals.

During the 1982 dispute NHS management used medical students as scabs to provide emergency cover for striking nurses in such a way as to weaken the strike.

A London-wide group "Medical Students Support the Health Workers" is being set up. This group will attempt to coordinate the

activities of London medical students who are supporting the strike.

It will also ensure that medical students will not again be used as scabs, and it will produce publicity to inform students of developments within the NHS and the present dispute.

Medical students, although traditionally politically inactive even by student politics standards, seem to be recognising that the existence of the health service itself is now at risk and only by united action with other health workers can they hope to protect their jobs and the future of the NHS.



SOCIALIST ORGANISER

We can win!

By Dennis Skinner MP

When I saw the Manchester nurses, after all their agonising, score that significant victory against the Thatcher government a few weeks ago, then I realised we had reached a watershed in industrial action in the Health Service.

If nurses had managed to cross a mighty chasm in their philosophical thoughts regarding striking, then it was no business of ours to run away from them.

There have been too many industrial issues in the past 4-5 years in which the leadership of the labour and trade union movement has not given 100% — the miners, the printers, Silentnight and so on.

In Wolverhampton, where they were trying to close a ward, patients tied themselves with bandages to the beds. Symbolically, that was one of the most dramatic things I have ever read about.

There is a momentum around in the Health Service that has not been around for some time. Once that momentum is created, it is like a flower that is growing — you have to give your support because it is such a tender plant.

We have to win this battle against Thatcher. The nurses proved that she can be beaten.

At the end of 1987 I wrote to Norman Willis, calling for a mass demonstration and action to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Health Service this year. I said I wanted the letter on the General Council agenda.

I got a little card back saying my comments had been noted. I wrote back saying I had not asked for my comments to be noted, I wanted it on the agenda. I got another press release telling me what they had done — they wanted to play it softly, not get involved in supporting strike action and so on.

We have to deal with this argument that is coming forward, including from some in the labour movement, that the NHS is different from other government departments; it is a bottomless pit into which any amount of money can just disappear from view.

Mrs Thatcher's own costs at No. 10 have risen four times since she got there in 1979. If NHS income had increased at the same rate as Mrs Thatcher's expenditure on No. 10 Downing Street, the NHS bill would be £28 billion and not £21 billion.

There is the 'bottomless pit' of the Falklands. It has just been revealed that another £582 million has been allocated to this year's finances, bringing it to well over £3 billion.

The government's contingency fund is another 'bottomless pit', which it is able to tap at any time. During the miners' strike they spent

£8,000 million trying to defeat the NUM.

Some have got carried away with the notion that the NHS has unique financial problems — an elderly population, demographic changes, technology and improved medical science, transplants and so on. They think the Tories have got a point about a 'bottomless pit'. But the cost of technology has hit everything; it always has, always will and is not a new development.

The reason why the Tories have not got the money to save hospitals from closure is that they are more concerned to find the money to buy Trident.

MOVE THIS MOTION!

That the National Executive Committee, deeply anxious about the state of the National Health Service, which has been deliberately starved of the necessary funds by the government, at the expense of the patients, the nurses, doctors and ancillary workers;
Recognising and respecting the deep sense of responsibility towards the patients under their care, which has always been shown by those who work in the NHS;

Pledges its full support for any strike action that may be decided upon by the nurses if they conclude that this represents the only practicable way of bringing pressure to bear on this

government to remind ministers of their public duty, and release the necessary funds at once;

And calls upon the whole labour and trade union movement and everyone who wishes to see the NHS survive, to give all possible financial, industrial and moral backing to the nurses, and others, if they do decide to proceed with their proposed action.

This resolution was moved by Tony Benn at the Labour Party NEC, but defeated 20-4. Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and Linda Douglas voted for. Jo Richardson abstained. Four members were missing: Bryan Gould, Eric Clarke, Renee Short and Diane Jouda. Members voting against included Tom Sawyer (NUPE) and Tom O'Kane (COHSE).

CLAUSE 28 CAN BE STOPPED!

A half-hearted amendment to the anti-gay Clause 28 has been defeated in the House of Lords. The ban on 'promoting homosexuality' stays.

Protests from the 'arts lobby' have been widespread, expressing concern, for example, that the work of homosexual writers might be removed from public libraries. Proponents of Clause 28 have insisted that this is not their intention. But they have pinpointed books that contain 'explicit references' to 'homosexual acts', and are easily available, as what they have in mind: a Tory Lady on Newsnight (Monday) held up a copy of the popular 'The Milkman's On His Way' as one example.

So 'gay smut' will be out — but art that just happens to have been produced by 'a gay' will be okay. What about smutty art, one wonders? For gay writers, like James Baldwin who died last year, are sometimes pretty explicit.

And there are plenty of 'explicit heterosexual acts' to be found in public library books. Why not ban them?

The advocates of Clause 28 are the sort of people who banned 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. For certain the law will in practice mean censorship. Clause 28 can still be stopped. It must be.



Photo: Peter Walsh. Profile

Back in business

"Suddenly, it seems the bad days are back. After almost a decade of retreat, the unions appear to be baring their teeth and threatening all manner of trouble."

That's how the Financial Times summed up the present strike wave building up across Britain.

This week has seen major action from health workers, seafarers and pit deputies. Skirmishes continue in local government with more action coming up soon and other groups of workers at Vauxhall, in the Post

Office and in the DHSS could be joining the action shortly.

We are seeing the first signs of a recovery in working class militancy since the defeat of the miners in 1985. Last year the number of workers prepared to take strike action increased by 75% from the 1986 figure, from a 50 year low of two million striker days to 3.5 million.

Union membership appears to be on the increase again. NALGO and USDAW have both reported year-on-year increases and the TGWU is set to follow.

Labour students' meeting rigged

Jane Ashworth reports

because NOLS were not given the statutory four days' notice of the selection meeting.

In fact Cambridge posted the notification eleven days before the meeting. In reply to this the office has said that the envelope was not posted but in fact hand delivered two days before the meeting. They are not telling the truth.

All this comes as no surprise to NOLS activists. The signs are that once more Conference and Council will be carved up in the interests of the ruling group.

For years this has been going on and the lack of democracy in NOLS has run hand in hand with the demise of NOLS as an independent organisation and with the demise of the National Union of Students (which NOLS runs), as an outgoing, campaigning organisation.

NOLS runs no campaigns; it produces stickers and posters sporadically and occasionally a dull publication called Labour Student News. The organisation effectively no longer exists on a national level except as an ineffective election machine.

NOLS has failed to satisfy the NUS membership; not because that membership is enormously to the

left or right of NOLS but because NOLS has failed to lead NUS into being a mass campaigning NUS. NUS has been unable to mount an effective fightback, despite the willingness of rank and file students to take action in defence of their colleges.

There are now many, many Labour Party members in NUS who want nothing to do with NOLS; and most of these people are on the left of the Party — the very people who want Benn to stand for leader, the very people who are organising support for the health workers. More than that, these disillusioned with NOLS include some of the best NUS activists in terms of work around further education colleges and further education union development.

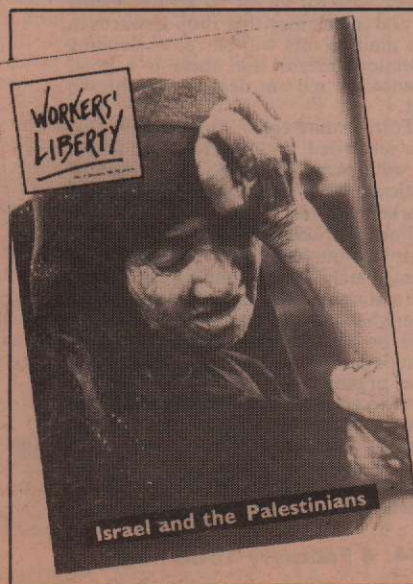
Not only are people alienated from NOLS. The vast majority of FE students — part-timers — cannot even join the organisation. The Constitution allows part-time post-graduates to join NOLS, but not working class students on the dole who go to FE a couple of days a week to get some qualification to help in their search for a job. (Socialist Students in NOLS hopes to change this position at the March NOLS conference).

There are other groups of Labour students who are profoundly dissatisfied with the way NOLS is being run. Socialist Action sup-

porters in Campaign Student have put together a slate for NUS Executive called the Internationalist Alliance for Socialism, which essentially supports the politics of the Labour Coordinating Committee but finds it necessary to organise against the slothfulness of the NOLS leadership.

Jewish students are also disillusioned with NOLS. They consider that the organisation has repeatedly ignored Jewish rights. The outstanding example was a couple of years ago when NOLS tried to trade-off NUS support for a banned Jewish Society against Union of Jewish Students support for a NOLS candidate in an NUS election! The relationship between the NOLS leaders and UJS is so poor that NUS President Vicky Phillips has publicly announced her intentions to sue a prominent UJS member over allegations of anti-semitism.

This atmosphere where left-wing students are tearing at each other's throats — with good reason — is conducive to nothing but aiding the growth of non-political student unionism in the form of 'Students for Students'. This is not necessarily a front for right wingers, although it includes some right-wingers, but a reaction from some students who want to get on with running their union for the benefit of their students — a banner the left needs to reclaim.



Palestine: two nations, two states!

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

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