The recent strike at Bury was part of the suspended. Immediately the DPPs united action would be far more local authorities have successfully. This of claimants, the workload is refused to co-operate with the team. Over the office are aware of this and all indefinitely at the end of term aim of privatizing large civils for a month and show no signs-

The recent strike at Bury DHSS offices in Manchester were taking action over a similar issue. And staff from four offices are on indefinite strike and the regions other offices have supported with a 24 hour strike. The dispute is over staff shortages - what with reduced staff levels and increasing numbers of claimants, the workload is too much. This dispute has been going on for a month now and shows no signs of being resolved. And in Oxford benefits office staff walked out indefinitely at the end of September over the same issue.

With all these 'local' disputes occurring at the same time, isn’t it about time DHSS staff realized that united action would be far more effective than sporadic 'local' strikes. It is entirely obvious that the Government is trying to divide the workforce - and it’s not only claimants who’ll be losing out. Thousands of DHSS jobs are also at risk.

It has got to be said that times have changed. Gone are the days of the quick victory or the small successful strike. Every single struggle that have any hope of succeeding are massive united ones. The social democratic system is cracking up and it’s going to drag us all down one by one unless we unite and fight.

The chairman of the strike committee told us of a case meeting to be held on the following morning. We saw two possible courses of action. The first was simply to stay on strike until the team left. In view of the fact that the team was due to move to Dundee and Barnstable the next week and that the workers at those two offices had already decided to come out if they did, solidarity seemed the obvious choice.

But another idea was being pushed by the DHSS staff. Ever mindful of the state of their bank account, they suggested everyone go back to work, and if the investigating team hassle the inspectors again, then all the inspectors (20 out of 170 workers!) would walk out by the day the union could afford full strike pay. And, they said, if Barnstable and Dundee are coming out too, there’s no way we can afford strike pay for everyone. They would go back to work. How stupid can you get! In the face of a common threat facing all staff at all DHSS offices in the country, the unions best response is to divide workers, not unite them.

At the same time as this 'local' dispute was fizzling out several DHSS offices in Birmingham were taking action over a similar issue. And staff from four offices are on indefinite strike and the regions other offices have supported with a 24 hour strike. The dispute is over staff shortages - what with reduced staff levels and increasing numbers of claimants, the workload is too much. This dispute has been going on for a month now and shows no signs of being resolved. And in Oxford benefits office staff walked out indefinitely at the end of September over the same issue.

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Complaints about police brutality continue unabated in Manchester and especially in the Moss Side area. A recent incident in Moss Side has confirmed the opinions of the people who live there that the police are above the law.

At the end of September, a young man was stopped in Moss Side by a drug squad officer, who wanted to take him to Moss Side Station to search him. Not surprisingly, he didn’t want to go. There was some discussion and a crowd gathered. He offered to be searched in front of the crowd. The police refused the offer, more police arrived and there was a scuffle. Two community workers arrived to try and calm things down, one of the workers was described as a ‘riot leader’ by police there and a fight then took place after which the police arrested four people and forcibly took them to Moss Side police station. One of those arrested was a community worker who had no injuries before his arrest but on release from Moss Side, has a suspected fractured skull and possibly permanent damage to one of his eyes.

The job of the police is not to protect the public – it is to protect the people in control of our lives from the people they control – us. So it is no use talking of ‘more community policemen and more democratic control of the police’. Only when people organise themselves so that they govern themselves and their arm and police are disband forever will people stop being treated with brutality by the police.

In Manchester the police committee seem powerless to stop the excesses of the latter day Jesus Christ, Anderson. Throughout Britain more and more people are dying in police custody every year. How recent appointment of a community liaison officer for Moss Side has been an unsung disaster. Although paid a huge salary the liaison officer has no credibility in the community.

Three days after this happened a demonstration ‘organised by a small number of local people (not even a formally organised group) attracted over 1,000 people including the local MP, councillors and JPs. Many people on the demonstration were middle aged or older people who had never been to a demonstration before. A petition was handed into the police demanding an independent inquiry into the Moss Side police.

Although we applaud the action of local people in coming out to protest in large numbers we think the calling of an independent enquiry is a waste of time. The Seaman inquiry recommend that officers who had taken unofficial weapons to deal with the civil disturbances be severely dealt with and prosecuted. However the DPP has refused to prosecute any officers – even though the officers concerned were identified through photographs.

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It is interesting to note that there has been a complete reawakening of this matter. The demonstration 3 days after the arrests was not reported and neither was a demonstration held outside the Court when the 4 arrested appeared last week.

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