

Wildcat

MANCHESTER FREE BULLETIN

NO. 7 PASS IT AROUND

DHSS Strikes

The recent strike at Bury DHSS office is another shining example of how traditional trade unionism is failing workers. We went to talk to pickets a week after the strike started and this is what we heard:

A team of special investigators had gone to the Bury office to try to offload some of the work of the inspectors onto clerical staff. This was part of the Governments Long term aim of privatising large chunks of the welfare state, involving 17,000 jobs lost. All the workers at the office are aware of this and all refused to co-operate with the team. Eevee

Eventually the team demanded to interview an inspector, who refused and was suspended. Immediately the SCPS (inspectors union) held a meeting and walked out on strike. The next day at the clerical workers (CPSA) meeting they walked out in sympathy. the strike

The strike demand was that the investigating team be withdrawn. The strike soon became official, but it seemed the unions main concern was how much strike pay they could afford (sounds like the boss, doesn't it?) A week later the DHSS was being very provocative and the unions were trying to get everyone back to work.

The chairman of the strike committee told us of a mass meeting to be held the following morning. He saw two possible courses of action. The first was simple - 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 union. Ever mindful of the state of their bank account, they suggested everyone go back to work, and if the investigating team hassled the inspectors again, then all the inspectors

(20 out of 170 workers!) would walk out. This way 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, therefore 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' dis-

pute was fizzling out several DHSS offices in Birmingham were taking action over a similar issue. 400 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 realised that united action would be far more effective than sporadic 'local' strikes. It is entirely obvious that the Government is trying to decimate the Welfare system - 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. The only struggles that have any hope of succeeding are massive united ones. The social and economic system is cracking up and it's going to drag us all down one by one unless we unite and fight.

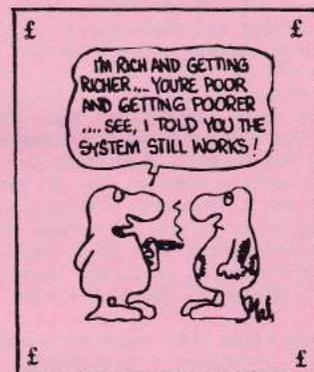
NHS Fiasco

'Another TUC day of action in support of the Health workers!' - You can hear the yawns and sighs in every workplace, even from workers who were originally enthusiastic supporters of such actions a short while ago. The dispute has been dragged out for six months now. Not only are the vital solidarity actions beginning to falter, but some hospital workers, like the Central Manchester Ambulance men are giving up and agreeing to settle for the Governments paltry offer.

The unions strategy of token solidarity actions, sectional strikes in the NHS and symbolic gestures, like routine demonstrations and petitions all well spaced out, is precisely that which defeated the Civil Servants back in 1981. The TUC is the same TUC that arranged for the isolation and defeat of the train drivers

OBJECTIVES

1. To report on, analyse and seek solidarity for important struggles amongst our fellow workers, especially in the Greater Manchester area.
2. To encourage independent working class activity outside of the control of the trade unions and in opposition to all political parties.
3. To aim at the revolutionary overthrow of all governments, bosses and leaders by a revolution in which the majority of people, who at the moment are just expected to follow orders, all play an equal part. And we would like to see the creation of a world without the wages/money/market system, where we can all have a say in how things are run, and where production is for human need not profit.



just a few months back. NALGO and NUPE with many workers in the NHS and in Local Authorities have successfully shelved any joint action over their common pay claims. Calls by the NUPE Conference and many mass meetings of hospital workers (up and down the country) for 'all out' action, with emergency cover only, have been either condemned or ignored by union leaders. And all this simply over a demand; not for the full claim - small as that is; but for a reference to arbitration. All arbitration did for the railway workers and teachers was to confirm a cut in their real wages, does anyone expect the Health workers to fair any better?

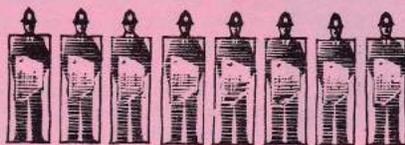
There is still a fighting spirit amongst many Health workers and there have been some excellent, imaginative actions outside the confines of the official Union campaign. BUT all of this will be wasted if there aren't some drastic changes of course.

If the dispute is to be won, NHS workers must start to take control of it away from the TUC and the unions and run things directly in their own interests. We think this means:-

- 1) Organising through general meetings and delegate committees of all the workers, irrespective of their position in the hierarchy or membership of different unions.
- 2) Sending delegations to visit other workplaces and arguing with them for real, effective solidarity action.
- 3) Starting an all out strike with the workers controlling the emergency service not the managers.
- 4) Extending the strike to other (especially Public Service) sectors, starting with those already in dispute, and organising joint actions.
- 5) Struggling for the full 12% claim and nothing less.

Community Police!

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 (22nd) a young man was stopped in Moss Side by drug squad officers, 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. 2 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 4 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 his release from Moss Side has a suspected fractured skull and possibly permanent damage to one of his eyes.

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 old people who had never been on a demonstration before. A petition was handed into the police demanding an independent enquiry 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 Scarman enquiry recommended 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.

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

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 the government and its army and police are disbanded forever will people stop being treated with brutality by the police.

It is interesting to note that there has been a complete news blackout 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.



Direct Works

"This Council is more right wing than the Tories" a union convenor said about Salford's Labour Council after being told that its Building Maintenance Committee had decided to sack all 430 workers in the Direct Labour Force, then offer them new jobs at reduced rates with poorer conditions. This kind of heavy handed dealing is certainly typical of Tory Councils but is it really any different to other more 'reasonable' Labour Councils, like Manchester, where the unions have just done a deal to accept 350 more redundancies? A deal, which in giving more money to early applicants, is deliberately intended to stifle any unofficial collective opposition. Of course both these Labour Councils are blaming the Tory Governments pressure on their organisation and finance. But the element of truth in this should-

n't hide two important points:

Firstly, what kind of so-called workers organisation is it that acts against the people it claims to represent?

Secondly, are our memories so short that we have forgotten the Labour Government in power carrying out its own cut-backs and attacks on workers living standards, even bringing in troops (firemen, dustmen) to black-leg?

To fight back effectively against these kind of attacks we've GOT to go beyond the politics of trade unionism and Labourism, which simply imprison us.

NAME THE SCAB QUIZ NAME THE SCAB
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- Q1. Who said "Kitson should have his head blown off"?
- Q2. Who described striking ambulance drivers as "terrorists"?
- Q3. Who declared a state of emergency and used troops to break a strike, and where?
- Q4. Who said we were "paying our selves more than the value of what we produced"?
- Q5. Who called for "the trimming of 'candy floss' items, such as education and social services so that more money would be available for the police"?

ANSWERS TO SCAB QUIZ ANSWERS TO SC
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At the end of 1982 what's
or
Milor Ronald Wooten, March 1980,
Midland Police Committee, Council-
A5. The Chairman of the West
well.
Mrs. Thatcher would do just as
A4. Jim Callaghan in 1976, or
In using troops as strike breakers.
Government got plenty of practice
drivers strike, 1979. The Labour
A3. Roy Mason in N.I. tanker
Its 'Jacks'.
member of the ruling class or
TUC General Secretary, or any
A2. Frank Chapple - next years
boss or bureaucrat.
1979, or any worker about any
A1. Striking lorry driver in Jar.

CONTACT Wildcat

We would like to hear from anyone who agrees with our objectives or is interested in the articles we publish. You may be able to give us useful information or write short articles for inclusion in the bulletin. If you like what we produce you could distribute copies of 'Wildcat' regularly at your workplace, school or club etc. We can supply anything from 10 to 100 copies quite easily, free of charge, although financial contributions are most welcome. If your particularly enthusiastic you might actually want to help produce the bulletin.

If you would like to come along to one of our regular meetings let us know.

We can post you single copies of 'Wildcat' as they appear if you send us a £1 contribution (cash or stamps).

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