RED PULSE

WORKERS POWER — HEALTH WORKERS' BULLETIN — SPECIAL EDITION — OCTOBER 1982 — 10p

ALL OUT NOW! STAY OUT TO WIN!

WITH rank and file health workers throughout the country barracking them for their inaction, and with Norman Fowler sneering at their every request for arbitration, the union leaders in the TUC Health Service Committee have been forced to step up their action.

They have recommended all-out indefinite strike action. After seven months of using every trick in the book to avoid this call, they have at last decided that the time has come. But the whole credit for this decision being taken lies with the thousands who have come out in the Days of Action. Their determination has forced the leaders to act.

However, even with Thatcher denouncing health workers as "ill-motivated trade unionists", and declaring that she will stand firm, the leaders have shown themselves to be far from resolute.

Instead of naming the day for the strike to start, they are trying one last ploy. They have asked all the unions to consult their members to get approval and then the matter will come before another TUC Committee.

This is a scandalous abdication of leadership. It is a recipe for further demoralising delay. There is no doubt that Spanswick, who spoke of an all-out strike with "two months notice...to let the government think about it" will drag his feet on taking a decision. Those who voted against the recommendation will probably do the same.

This danger of delay also poses the danger of disunity as the union leaders fall out with each other over the timing of the action.

Decisive measures are needed to speed up acceptance of the TUC's recommendation, and action upon it. The campaign against health workers by the Tories' spiteful propaganda machine - the press, radio and TV - will intensify. The Tories will aim to split the masses of health workers from the militants fighting for all out action. The union leaders have not exactly deluged the members with propaganda arguing for all out action. They are unlikely to start a serious campaign now.

It is down to the militants to ensure that a decision for all-out, indefinite strike action is taken quickly. This can be done by a campaign of mass meetings of all health unions in which all the arguments can be put. Such meetings must be informed democratic meetings. Stewards and Strike Committees must produce their own barrage of propaganda to counter the bosses' lie machine.

The TUC Committee's refusal to issue a clear call for action should serve as a warning. When a strike takes place they are likely to use it to negotiate a deal as quickly as possible, even if it falls well below the full claim.

An all-out indefinite strike needs to be organised so that it can win. It must be controlled by local democratic strike committees, which should elect delegates to a national strike committee. This body could serve as the authentic voice of the rank and file. It must be cross-union. It must have the power of veto over all deals negotiated by the TUC committee. It must fight for a majority of lay delegates from all the unions to sit on the TUC committee.

Action by health workers must be linked to action by other workers. The other week water workers, health workers and British Telecom workers - all in the public sector - staged separate Days of Action. The Tories must be delighted in the face of such disunity.

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Picture: G.M.Cookson

Confence must organise rank and file

THE October 30th stewards conference can become a turning point in the health workers' struggle. It is being held at a time when increasing numbers of health workers are realising that the strategy of the TUC leaders is proving ineffective. It offers an excellent opportunity for strike leaders to take stock of the present situation and organise to take the struggle forward. It must provide stewards and strikers with a really democratic forum, open to resolutions and speakers from all delegating bodies, within which to discuss the issues facing us.

The conference should decide to launch a campaign to fight for all-out indefinite strike action, with emergency cover being decided upon by workers themselves. No other action can win the full claim.

The campaign must be taken out to rank and file hospital workers throughout the country. This must mean that strike committees produce regular bulletins putting the case for all-out indefinite action. Regular mass and section meetings must be held to keep all health workers in touch with developments and give them all a voice in decisions. The strike committees must be opened to the activists from the picket lines. Only in this way can we build a base to launch all-out action.

In order to co-ordinate such a campaign, conference should form a steering committee of delegates from strike committees and stewards committees. That steering committee should campaign to secure further affiliations from all strike and stewards committees. It should initiate a campaign of pickets and resolutions meetings and bulletins to demand of our leaders that they organise all-out indefinite strike action.

The demonstrations in Glasgow and Birmingham showed that this call can win widespread support. Unless we try to organise that support *now* the Trade Union leaders will drag the dispute on until large numbers of workers will have become demoralised and unable to resist a sell-out.

The steering committee should press for an immediate meeting with the TUC Health Services Committees. We should co-ordinate action in every union to force the leaders to call us all out. We must make every effort to pressure the leaders to fight until we win. But should the leaders refuse to issue the call, and should they continue to dither then we must not give up and accept defeat lying down. Out of this conference we must build a network of strike committees that can force the bureaucrats to act, *if possible,* but which can organise decisive action itself, *where necessary.*

by Ron Giles



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Militants must learn lessons of strike

IF the Tories are to be beaten in this struggle we need to learn the lessons of the dispute so far. There can be no doubt that health workers have shown their willingness to fight and to extend the action. But, so far, we have not been strong enough to force the union leaders to change course and call for decisive action to win the full claim.

It's not just the national officials who have been dragging their feet. In many areas militants have faced obstruction from their local officials as well. Take Sheffield for example. Ken Curran, NUPE full-time officer, has swung 180 degrees in this dispute. Knowing that he was remembered as a sell-out merchant after 1979, he promised last April that he would do everything the membership demanded this time.

Fine words ! But, in practice Ken Curran has acted to derail effective action. He stopped the Rotherham strikers from spreading their indefinite strike to other areas and withdrew their strike pay. He isolated them and starved them back to work.

Curran has not fought seriously to implement NUPE conference's call for an all-out indefinite strike. He and his South Yorkshire henchman, Sean Hilliard, did not even mention it at a Yorkshire and Humberside meeting three days after the conference. He warned a hospital mass meeting that if they took all-out strike action they could expect no support from him. So much for doing anything the members demanded !

In addition, Curran and Hilliard, like many local officials have campaigned to sabotage Leicester and Sheffield's call for a national conference of health workers. When they lost their argument on the area joint shop stewards' committee in Sheffield they proceeded to call a NUPE shop stewards' meeting in order to **instruct** them not to attend.

Of course, in some areas there are officials who are more responsive to our demands than Curran and the like. But, because they are not under our **control**, even this minority of officials cannot be relied upon. In the absence of rank and file control they are more prone to pressure from their employers – the national officials.



Massive support for the health workers on September 22nd. *Picture: G.M.Cookson*

Any local officials who thought of taking the NUPE conference decision seriously last summer were quickly told other wise by head office. Virtually all the local officials toed the line when a letter from the NUPE head office was circulated instructing them not to act on the conference resolutions. Those who have been prepared to back local militancy or the call for a conference have been putting their jobs on the line.

The TUC Health Services Committee has maintained a tight grip on the dispute throughout. They have had no consultations with the strike committees who actually organise the action. They have ignored letters and resolutions expressing disquiet at the TUC strategy. If it had been left to them the dispute would have petered out long ago.

It is the rank and file organisations that have carried out the work of mobilising and extending the action. The call for a day of action on the 22nd of September was undoubtedly a result of rank and file pressure. The success of that, and other days of action, was entirely due to the work of the local strike organisations. In Leicester the Health Coordinating Committee produced its own leaflets for the local factories and sent out delegations to win support from council workers and miners. Those workers who took solidarity action were invited to meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee. In Sheffield, stewards from the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions were invited to the Area Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

Similarly the most effective and imaginative tactics have originated with the strike committees. It was not the official leadership that called for occupations such as that at the Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge, or the staggered withdrawal of strategic sections as took place in Manchester, or the picket of the Grange Lane Supply Stores in Leicester.

The same is true in terms of winning support from other workers. Thousands of pounds have been raised from other trade unionists as a result of health workers organising workplace and factory gate meetings. That money has gone a long way to sustaining selective strike action in the hospitals.

Wherever effective action has threatened the officials' control of the dispute they have moved to sabotage it. At the beginning of the dispute, in May, elaborate plans were laid to send pickets to industrial workplaces to argue for solidarity action. This was soon torpedoed by Curran who, together with the leaders of the miners and the Confed unions, wanted to maintain control over that side of the strike.

The organisation of health workers on the ground has blossomed in this strike. Since 1979 there has been a push, in some areas, to build Joint Shop Stewards' Committees (JSSC's) on a hospital and area basis. This has undoubtedly paid off in terms of strengthening the ability to organise the strike in those areas. At the same time, in those areas where JSSC's have not previously existed, strike committees or coordinating committees have developed that have been committed to mobilising the rank and file of the health unions around the one day strikes. In Leicester, for example, the strike committee is open to all strikers. The strike committees have been responsible for organising militant lobbies of the TUC Health Services Committee and the health unions' conferences, and they were instrumental in getting the resolution on direct action onto the floor of the NUPE conference.

In most areas, however, the strike committees have remained tied to the lead given by local officials. They have not, so far, been able to forge links between themselves on a national scale. The response to the Leicester and Sheffield call for a conference, however, shows that there are large numbers of activists who wish to break out of the isolation and political passivity in which the leaders have tried to cast them.

The tactics of the leadership threaten to dissipate the energy and organisation that have been built. In general the area by area rolling days of action had less support than the September 22nd day of action. Some militants have reacted to the TUC's feeble tactics by arguing against support for one day actions – saying that it must be all-out or nothing.

The most recent example of this has been the London ambulance-workers who refused to support the regional day of action. This stand, taken by some stewards, in good faith, plays straight into the hands of the TUC, because they can present it as a decline in support for any action. At the present time the more support we can drum up for the one day actions and in the fight for committment to all out strike action, the greater is the pressure on the TUC not to sell us out and to adopt a strategy that can win.

The fact that the one day actions have been a success, despite the problems that militants have faced in arguing support for them, has increased the pressure on the TUC and is also a testimony to our argument that health workers are still prepared to fight.

That will to fight must be built on now to force the union leaders to name the day for an all-out indefinite strike. To make that strike effective we must learn the lessons of the last months and organise to place the running of the dispute under the control of the organised rank and file health workers.

by Jane Bruton



OPEN THE UNIONS TO WOMEN WORKERS

AT the forefront of every march, picket and lobby of the health dispute, have been thousands of women workers. All the major unions involved have massive numbers of women organised behind their banners. In the dispute they have played an active and decisive role, well beyond the "normal" level of involvement of women in the unions.

The fact that in "normal" times women are less involved has nothing to do with the usual excuses that trade union leaders spout. It is not because women are naturally passive or not interested in the union.

It has everything to do with the fact that the union leaders have created a whole series of barriers in the unions to women's involvement. Meetings outside of worktime, for example, cause enormous problems for women with kids to look after.

These barriers are reflected in the number of women stewards and officials within the key health unions. NUPE, which prides itself on its policy towards women has a terrible record. While in 1980 66% of its membership were women, only 27% of the stewards were female. Again, 1980 figures show that of the 125 Area Officers only 6 were female. COHSE has an even worse record. Three-quarters of its members are women, but there is only one woman National Officer.

In this strike women need to organise to redress the balance. The barriers to their full involvement in the unions must be broken down by a fight now to impose the norm of union meetings at the workplace and in works time.

Strong, democratic women's sections should be built in the unions and women should have the right to caucus. This way women can organise their participation in the unions and not become ghettoised, away from the men in the union. The issues affecting working class women - low pay, dsicrimination, childcare problems etc - can all be placed firmly on the agendas of the unions.

The mobilisation of women in the dispute offers the chance to win these policies. Militants must ensure that they are taken up in every branch, district and stewards committee.

WHY THE BUREAUCRATS BETRAY

MANY militants in the course of this long drawn out dispute have asked themselves why the officials are so set on avoiding effective or decisive action. Why, despite having Thatcher and Fowler repeatedly spit in their faces, they seem readier to fawn than to fight. Like the noble Duke of York they are very good at marches and parades, but not so hot when it comes to a real battle.

Revolutionary socialist criticism of union officials goes beyond criticism of individual officials and their failings. When we say that the full-time officials of the unions are a *bureaucracy* what do we mean ?

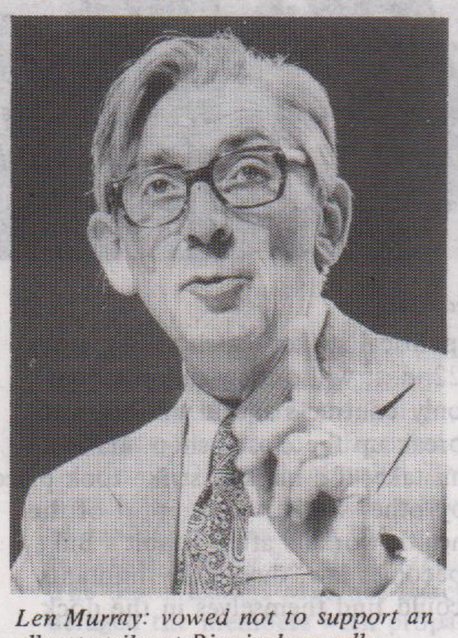
Most people know about the *effects* of bureaucracy – the slow and cumbersome procedures, the red tape, the rudeness and contempt for democracy, the inefficiency and an inability to be decisive at the right moment. But what is a bureaucracy and why do we say that the whole body of union officials is one? After all don't unions need full time officials ? Isn't a bureaucracy inevitable ?

Fourteen years ago the Donovan Commission estimated that there were something like 3,000 paid officials. In 1974, the Transport and General had 485 officials. These officials, supposedly the servants of the membership are, in fact, the masters of the unions. How has this come about ? How has possession of full time office enabled them to restrict and narrow the democracy of the unions to a largely ornamental extra ?

In many unions the officials are not elected at all but are appointed. Even where they are elected, they are often elected for life. In NUPE, the General Secretary is *appointed for life.* In some unions, like the AUEW the officials are subject to re-election but the periods (five or seven years) are long and allow the officials to remain unchecked and unaccountable at the time when they are actually making decisions against the interests of the rank and file. Certainly some national officials are subject to control by a lay executive or by a conference but, again, the indirectness or the infrequency of elections to these bodies and the fact that the 'lay' delegates to these bodies are increasingly drawn from the ranks of stewards, convenors and branch officials who are engaged nearly 'full-time' on union business, all tends to weaken this control.

Beyond this the very base of the union democracy is weak. Some unions, like the AUEW, do not base their branches in the workplace. Thus, when elections took place on a *branch* basis only between five and ten per cent of the membership voted. The 'reform' of postal balloting results in more members voting but it subjects them to the full pressure of the bosses' media in the home. There they are isolated from their fellow workers, from the discussion, argument and solidarity that is vital to real workers' democracy.

A crucial factor in the distance between full time officials and the membership is the wide difference in income and life style between them and their members. Generally, national officials are paid double or treble the average wage of their members. Obviously they are not directly spurred to struggle in the same way as the rank and file are. They are not under the same material pressures and as a result often do not understand the urgency of meeting a claim in full. They will be more open to pressure from the bosses to negotiate a compromise.



Picture: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Len Murray: vowed not to support an all-out strike at Birmingham rally.

Trade union officialdom spends a good deal of its time in close proximity to the managers and bosses and government officials. In the Whitley Councils and Joint Industrial Wages Councils (some 200 of them) the machinery of 'industrial relations' involves the officials in regular and systematic 'bargaining' with the management. It is hardly surprising that the official comes to see this as his or her main arena of work – direct action by the membership becomes an increasingly unwanted last resort, even an undesirable option to be avoided at all cost.

In these conditions the pressure of the employers, the managers, the government officials, the millionaire-owned press and the subservient media is constant. The pressure of the membership is only episodic and it is filtered through a machinery designed to obstruct it. Thus, the officialdom becomes a permanent force for stability, compromise and peace at any price. It becomes a conservative bureaucracy which rules the unions in the interests of the bosses. Thus, whilst the unions were founded to defend the interests of their members against the constant attacks of the bosses – whilst their founders were often socialists who recognised the link between this defence and an offensive to get rid of capitalism altogether – the bureaucrats evolved into a force for class-collaboration.

As early as 1893, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, not revolutionaries by a long shot, indeed they were life long friends of the bureaucracy, observed the process that weaned the official away from the rank and file *"The former vivid sense of the privations and the subjections of the artisan's life gradually fades from his mind, and he begins more and more to regard all complaints as perverse and unreasonable. With this intellectual change may come a more invidious transformation. Nowadays the salaried officer to a great union is courted and flattered by the middle-class. He is asked to dine with them and will admire their well-appointed houses, their fine carpets, the ease and luxury of their lives ... He goes to live in a little villa in a lower middle class suburb. The move leads to dropping his workmen friends, and his wife changes her acquaintances. With the habits of his new neighbours he insensibly adopts more and more of their ideas. His manner to his members undergoes a change. A great strike threatens to involve the union in a desperate war. Unconsciously biased by distaste for the hard and unthankful work which a strike entails, he finds himself in small sympathy with the men's demands and eventually arranges a compromise on terms distasteful to a large section of his members."*

These "compromises distasteful to the members" – in plain language, sell outs, become the aim and object of the bureaucracy. Obviously, in a strike, the members have to be mobilised in such a way as to frighten the employers into conceding something. However, this is normally done in such a way as to ensure that the members do not, "get out of hand" that is to say take democratic control of the dispute.

This is even true of most 'left' officials. Arthur Scargill, Rodney Bickerstaffe and others like them often declare for socialism, for rank and file action and so on. Nine times out of ten this proves to be just hot air. Bickerstaffe's refusal for the last five months to wage a serious fight for the NUPE conference decision on all-out strike action is an example. In essence we think the 'left' bureaucrats are prepared to go along with most of the right wing's fundamental beliefs. However, where the 'lefts' do declare for democracy or for the rank and file then, far from ignoring them, militants need to hold them to their words. They must be held to account.



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

Spanswick, Jenkins, Chappell: each man out to get away with "a compromise distasteful to a large section of his members".

The best way to ensure that they are is by the maximum mobilisation of the whole of the membership. All disputes, all struggles, set in motion a powerful force of the rank and file against the bureaucracy. The task that faces militants is to build up the organisations of struggle – shop stewards' committees, strike committees, workplace branches – and to fight to make the union leaders accountable to these bodies.

In a dispute the achievement of maximum rank and file control is essential but the job does not end there. The situation today and the prospect for the coming years is one of vicious attacks by governments and employers.

In the battles that will take place the bureaucracy will work overtime to isolate militants from their base. They will attempt to turn the majority of members, generally left passive, against the militants. There can be no complacency on this score.

In the first place those committed to fight the bureaucracy must organise themselves. The present minority of militants in each union should be linked into an organised minority within and between unions. This organisation can become the starting point for a mass rank and file movement. Such a movement must mobilise the majority against the bureaucracy by winning it to policies that can place the unions on a war footing.

This means transforming the unions. It means democratising them, dissolving the privileged and unaccountable bureaucracy and winning the membership through the struggle for militant socialist policies. We can do this around the following demands:

* Unionise the whole workforce. For real industrial unions - one union for all health workers.
* For joint shop-stewards' committees in every major workplace, that regularly report to mass meetings held in work time and which publish a regular bulletin or news-sheet.
* For trade unions branches on a workplace basis, meeting in work time with no loss of pay. Only thus can full involvement of the members be achieved.
* All officials to be subject to regular (one or two yearly) election and recall by their electors. They should receive the average wage of their members.
* Union policy must be decided by the annual lay delegate conferences, and these should elect an all-lay executive committee to whom the officials should be answerable between conferences.
* All elections should be held in the workplace at mass meetings, with candidates' statements and material evaluated in advance.
* Replace "block votes" within the unions, the TUC and the Labour Party, with majority and minority votes, taken in appropriate bodies after democratic debate.

The full democratisation of the unions, though, is not an end in itself. Even within democratised unions there will be members or accountable officials tied to a reformist perspective for dealing with workers' grievances.

For this reason it is necessary to win the militant minority to a struggle for communist class-struggle politics. Democratisation of the unions ensures that workers can decide in favour of such politics by consent, and not have them imposed by conspiracy. The unions must be opened up to political matters, political debate. The revolutionary transformation of the unions must be linked to the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of society. A rank and file movement is needed, not merely to control the existing union leaders, but to replace them with a revolutionary communist leadership.



Picture: Laurie Sparham (Report)

January 1979: rank and file unionists shout down union officials during Low Paid Workers Day of Action.

TORIES TARGET PUBLIC SECTOR

HARDLY a day goes by without Fowler, Thatcher or Tebbit stating that there is no more money for the Health workers. Every day of action has met the same stubborn reply – 7.5% for nurses and 6% for the rest is the 'final offer.' While 'extra cash' to the tune of £2 billion was conjured up from somewhere to pay for the Tories' bloody adventure in the South Atlantic, the £400 million to meet the 12% pay claim is nowhere to be found. The reason has nothing to do with the sum of money, 'available'. It has everything to do with the Tories' overall strategy in the public sector.

Once Thatcher got through the door of Number 10 she immediately made known her plans for the public sector. The first White Paper on the economy declared, *"Public expenditure is at the heart of Britain's economic problems."* More specifically health,education and social expenditure were at the heart of the problem. Massive pay rises for the police and the multi-million pound Trident missile system are important exceptions to the Tories' "everything must go" attitude to the public sector.

For Thatcher the argument is a simple one. Too much money is spent on providing a free health service, a free education service etc. Too much money has been pumped into unprofitable nationalised industries like British Rail. Britain's bosses' profits are too low to allow for such luxuries. So, in order to boost those profits the profitable parts of the public sector must be hived off (as the Tories are doing to British Telecom and North Sea Oil) and the unprofitable ones must simply be closed down (Steel, BL etc). This will divert resources to more profitable concerns, make the country, 'live within its means' and create an atmosphere of competitiveness that will encourage investments, punish complacency and put the nation on its feet again. The results for workers have been devastating.

In the manufacturing industries within the public sector these policies have meant job losses in Steel of 82,000 and in BL 65,000 jobs have gone. In British Rail, 1981 saw 10,000 jobs disappear. At the same time unemployment in both the private sector and the nationalised industries has meant that bosses have been able to drive down wages by repeatedly threatening redundancies if claims are too high. Norman Tebbit's Department of Employment Gazette gloated that, *"The doubling of unemployment during the last two years has held wages in the private sector to about 17% below what they otherwise would have been."*

Despite all their cuts, despite all the job losses and despite having held down our wages by so much the Tories are clamouring for more blood. The promised fruits of Thatcherism have not materialised. Profits have not been restored. In fact, in 1981 recorded profit rates were at an all time low according to the Bank of England. The working class has paid dearly for the economic crisis – but the crisis has not gone away. The Tories' solution is to make us pay even more and, as always, this means that our services are at the top of their hit list.

While the 'Think Tank' report on the Welfare State has been temporarily shelved, its Tory architects have not given up on its proposals. The aim is to dismantle the Welfare State. To begin with they are trying to privatise the NHS out of existence. Area Health Authorities are being purged in order to clear the way for Tory appointees who will implement the plans to privatise laundry and catering facilities. Fowler's partner, Gerard Vaughan, has said that one quarter of all hospital work will be in private hands by 1985. Also, the Tories are giving a big boost to the vultures in BUPA. In 1979 the then Minister for Social Services Patrick Jenkin amended the Health Services Act to allow consultants to spend 10% of their time on private work without any loss in NHS salary. Grants and handouts have also meant that private hospitals are on the increase. While NHS hospitals are closed, the 150 private hospitals are being added to with 20 under construction and 20 more planned.



Thatcher: resolute as ever in her attacks on workers. *Picture: G.M.Cookson*

Furthermore, the number of beds they are allowed to have has been increased from 75 to 120. Add to this their insurance schemes and the picture becomes absolutely clear. The Tories are insisting that wealth comes before health.

The health dispute has highlighted another aspect of the Tories' general attack on the working class – their attack on our organisations. While we are campaigning for support on our marches and pickets from other trade unionists, the Tories are starting to denounce our action as illegal. When the Fleet Street electricians took action in our support their leader, Sean Geraghty was whisked before a court of law and fined.

Sure enough the Tories have managed to establish a law, Prior's Employment Act, that makes basic trade union action illegal. What is more Tebbit plans to add to these shackles with his own 'Employment Bill' – scheduled to become law in November. This law will outlaw, 'political strikes', such as September 22nd, it will outlaw union labour only contracts and it will begin to break up the closed shop. Make no mistake, if a massive strike took place by other workers in support of the health workers after Tebbit's Bill becomes law, then many militants could find themselves in the dock.

The health dispute really has thrown a spotlight on the whole gamut of anti-working class policies that the Tories are pursuing. It has exposed the class wide nature of those attacks – they are affecting all of us. The reason the Tories are attacking on all these fronts is not because they are mad (although Norman Tebbit is as rabid a Tory as we are likely to see) but because they have set their sights on pulling Britain's capitalists through their economic crisis by making *us* pay the full cost of it. Our jobs, our wages and our social services are to be slashed to boost their profits. And to make sure we cannot fight back effectively they are chaining our unions with a spate of anti-union laws.

We need to match the Tories' own determination. They are conscious fighters for the CBI, the City of London, the bankers and financiers who milk the public services and nationalised industries through interest charges. We need a leadership that will fight for our class. To appeal for a more, 'compassionate' replacement for Norman Fowler from the ranks of the Tories, as the Parliamentary Labour Party recently did, is a sick joke. Who does Michael Foot propose – Tebbit ? Biffen ? Lord Carrington ?Or perhaps the miners' old enemy Heath ? This approach, echoed by Spanswick and others who appeal to the Tories' "reason" is not the sort of leadership that the working class needs. In the face of the Tories' offensive we need a counter-offensive that meets their 'Resolute Approach' with direct action – strikes that can hit the bosses' profits, occupations that stop the closures, pickets that stop their scabs. The present dispute can become the starting point for a united fightback. By building support for an all-out indefinite strike by the health workers through local solidarity action committees, workers can begin to co-ordinate their action.

When we ask for solidarity action we are not asking for charity or sympathy, we want common action against the common enemy. The miners' pay claim, resistance to the steel closures, the water workers' claim, resistance to the privatisation of British Telecom, together with the health workers' claim itself all confront the Tories. To face the enemy separated from each other weakens us all enormously. *We must face it together under the slogans :-*

***Bring forward the claims in the public sector – for a united strike throughout the public sector to smash the Tories' income policy !**

***Defend the public sector – Stop all cuts – Restore all cuts to the pre-1976 levels !**

***Mobilise the whole working class to confront the Tory anti-union laws – For a general strike to wipe them off the Statute Book !**

What is 'Workers Power' ?

RED Pulse is produced by health workers who support the revolutionary organisation "Workers Power". We produce regular bulletins for health workers in Sheffield and Leicester.

From the start of this dispute we have argued for an all-out indefinite health strike, backed by solidarity action as the way to win. We have warned of the treachery and compromises of the official leaders. We have fought to strengthen the ability of rank and file health workers to organise themselves, to run the dispute and to hold their leaders to account. That is why we have fully backed Leicester and Sheffield's call for a health workers' conference.

Why do we do this? We don't do it only because the health workers have a good case. We do it because workers in the health service, as in the state-owned and private industry are not simply under attack from this or that particularly vicious boss or minister - not even just because we hate the Tories (and we do!).

Behind Fowler and Thatcher lies a system in crisis - Capitalism. It is a system that puts millions on the dole, seeks to drive down the wages of the desperately poorly paid ever lower, strives to claw back the gains made by workers - the health service, housing and public services. It is a system that seeks to divert attention from its crimes and to bolster its profits by bloody wars like that in the South Atlantic. Lastly, it is a system that, under Thatcher and Reagan is arming for a war that would obliterate the greater part of humanity. We want to destroy capitalism before it destroys us. We want to replace it with a system where production is planned to meet human need.

That means taking the wealth of society - the banks, the factories - out of the hands of a tiny class of capitalists, and into the hands of those who produce the wealth. It means the working class taking power into its own hands.

Every trade union battle opens the eyes of hundreds of workers as to the real workings of society. The "impartial" judges outlaw all effective trade union action; the "neutral" police break their picket lines; the "free press" attempts to poison the minds of their fellow workers.

The strike committee, the delegations to fellow workers, solidarity actions, all in their own particular way illustrate the enormous potential power of the working class. And we produce this bulletin because we don't want these lessons to go unlearned. We don't want health workers to finish this dispute and return to business as usual, as if nothing had happened.

The health workers' strike has shown the potential power of working class organisation and solidarity. It is a power that can rule the world, and finally abolish exploitation and poverty. All our work in this dispute is dedicated to winning a crushing victory for the health workers over the Tories, to building and strengthening workers' democracy in the unions, to building a movement and a leadership that can defeat and overthrow not only the Thatcher gang, but the capitalist class itself.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The situation must be remedied. Solidarity action by miners, dockers and transport workers could hit the bosses' profits and help bring about a speedy victory for health workers. More than that it can provide the basis for a united fightback against the Tories.

A final trick up the sleeve of the bureaucrats is the TUC Code of Conduct. This ensures that emergency and accident cover is in the hands of the management. Make no mistake, they will use this privilege, alongside the army, to break the strike.

The strikers themselves are the only people who have the right to decide on whether emergency cover should be applied. Unless it is the strikers who decide, scabbing will be wholesale.

In the coming weeks the health dispute will enter its most crucial phase. We need to make sure that as it does so the whole membership of all the unions is united for:

AN ALL OUT STRIKE UNTIL THE CLAIM IS MET IN FULL.

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