

N.H.S. DISPUTE

IT'S EVERY WORKER'S FIGHT

For over 5 months health workers have been resisting the Government's attempt to cut their already low wages.

In their fight for a 12% rise the government is not the N.H.S. workers' only enemy. They must beware those most effective strike breakers, the T.U.C. and the Union leaders. These bureaucrats still have blood on their hands after stabbing the train drivers in the back. Now in the health service dispute they're dictating a strike strategy that has about as much bite as a toothless sheep.

TOKEN GESTURES

The T.U.C. Health Services Committee are limiting national action to 1 or 2 day strikes, weeks apart. What's more, Union leaders are trying to restrict solidarity action. When the Fleet St. electricians struck in support of the health workers they defied not only a court injunction but also the T.U.C., COHSE leader Spanswick, and the print union leaders. While restricting workers' direct action, Union bosses are pushing the futile course of arbitration.

This compromising approach can be adopted by local Union leaders too - witness the actions of Grampian Association of Health Service Unions chairman Jim Kiddie at the demo against Thatcher on Sept. 1st. While the rest of the 2,000 crowd were intent on giving Thatcher a hot reception - complete with scrambled eggs - Kiddie busied himself pointing out demonstrators he considered "troublemakers" to the police. This helped the cops arrest 4 people and hit at least 2 others.

BUREAUCRATS OUT

To win, health workers will have to take control of the strike away from the T.U.C. Health Services Committee and the Union leaders.

Decisions about strike strategy could be taken at mass meetings of all workers at each hospital, or site. This would also help overcome any divisions between workers in different unions. The strike actions could be co-ordinated nationally by meetings of elected delegates, mandated by the local mass meetings.

HOW TO WIN ?

What kind of action could win the dispute ? Mass rallies of Grampian N.H.S. workers have twice voted in favour of all health workers going on strike, leaving only emergency cover.

Health workers have recently occupied Health Service administration buildings in several areas. Such occupations taking place all over the country would have a tremendous impact.

Solidarity action by other workers is vital - and must go beyond symbolic gestures. We need to seriously disrupt the economy. Experience shows that a very effective way to win such support is for health workers to speak directly to mass meetings at different workplaces.

IT'S US VERSUS THEM

The Health Service dispute is really a struggle between the ruling class and the entire working class (and that includes unemployed, women who work in the home, etc.).

This Tory government - like Labour before it - aims to slash workers' living standards, in order to boost employers' profits. Governments everywhere, from Poland to the U.S.A., are doing the same, as capitalism East and West sinks deeper into recession.



To effectively resist, we need to go onto the offensive in our struggles. For example, health workers occupying administration buildings is very positive. By these occupations N.H.S. workers are implicitly challenging the whole hierarchical set-up of the N.H.S., where most workers have low status and no say in making decisions. If anyone knows how things could be improved in their own area of work it's the ancillary and nursing staff - not some pen pushing bureaucrat or government minister.

This principle applies to all jobs. Why shouldn't all those doing the work collectively decide on how it's to be done ?

TAKING OVER

How can we make such a change ? Certainly not by voting in a new set of politicians to rule over us.

But if workers in all industries and jobs occupied their workplaces....If workers then started to run the workplaces under their own control without any bosses or managers.... If people re-organised production so that it was geared to human needs not making profits.... Then we could create a world worth living in.

WHAT NEXT?

We can strike a blow against this exploiting system right now by ensuring the health workers win their claim. A victory for the health workers will be a victory for all working class people. The rally in support of the health workers in Aberdeen on 27th August proclaimed that Aberdeen workers were prepared to play their part in a general strike in support of the Health workers - we must be prepared to make these words a reality.

22ND SEPT....NHS AND OTHER WORKERS STRIKING IN SUPPORT OF NHS WORKERS CLAIM....