



**Healthworkers
speak out -
see inside**

United fight against 1%

In the face of a storm of protest from healthworkers the Tories are pleading poverty. They are desperate to fund their tax cut bribes at the expense of our pay packets and public services. Their attempt to split the workforce up around the country through the divisive local negotiations tactic must be responded to by a united national campaign

THE TORIES have all but given up hope of victory in the next election. They are now banking everything on tax cuts in 1996. So they are making no attempt to win support from the population as a whole. Healthworkers have rightly responded to the government's paltry one percent pay offer for the insult that it is, but - unless we can organise a united campaign - the Tories, despite their deep unpopularity, could get away with another vicious attack on the working class.

The government has decided that any attempt to court popularity with its NHS policy is doomed to failure, so it is pressing ahead with its push to the market and privatisation. The barbaric attack on the health service - with hospital closures, cuts in services and job losses throughout the country - is deeply unpopular, but so far has not turned into action. The attack on pay could be the spark that is needed for workers to turn that anger into action.

This does not mean that workers are in an automatically strong position. However angry nurses are, however sure they are of 'public support', market forces are doing their job. Rationalisations, closures and redundancies have made it easier to divide and demoralise healthworkers. Nobody's job is safe, and in many areas there is a pool of

unemployed waiting to step into their shoes.

The government has cashed in on this for all it is worth. It has bought off the doctors and introduced an element of local bargaining to reduce the likelihood of a united fightback. So in hospitals where there appears to be little chance of closure - perhaps because of essential specialisation - some local union representatives believe they can pull off a good deal.

'Good' is of course a relative term. The full three percent (gained at the cost of services and jobs) would still leave workers worse off, as inflation edges up towards four percent.

Workers must look to a united fightback now, while the government is itself weak. Unison, the main health union has announced an NHS 'Fair Pay Day' on March 30, with demonstrations outside every hospital. This will be followed by consultations of all its health grades, aiming to co-ordinate industrial action, including with other unions. Even the leaders of the Royal College of Nursing, the 'professional' organisation, are looking to drop their no-strike commitment. The Royal College of Midwives has already decided to ballot over the issue.

These are positive steps but they will not in themselves force victory. Healthworkers need to organise across union lines,

preparing to take the running of the dispute into their own hands. They need to link up first and foremost with other public sector workers, also faced with devastating attacks.

Above all we need a vision moving beyond the limits of the system to what workers actually need. That is why the Communist Party in its manifesto for the forthcoming local elections says: "Both Tories and Labour have starved the NHS of funds. The NHS should meet the growing needs of the population, not operate according to what capitalism can afford. NHS hospitals must be run not by trusts but democratic committees made up of trade unions and elected local working class representatives."

- Abolish the waiting lists!
- Health care according to need not profit!
- No health cuts! No hospital closures!
- Sack Bottomley, not the nurses!

A story of nurses in revolt

Brent CP presents a video showing of *Running out of patience*, followed by a discussion introduced by Pat Mc Manus, veteran of the 1988 Charing Cross Hospital strike. Wednesday March 1, 7.30pm. Call 081-459 7146 for details.

Demonstrate!

The Fight Against Education Cuts campaign is organising a national demonstration in London against the education cuts on Saturday March 25. Call 0589-789104 for details

Strike back on March 30!

Short sighted

Comrade Vernon Douglas implies that Mary Ward’s article on the M77 is guilty of tailing the Greens and their “reactionary, anti-industrial agenda” (Letters, February 16). However, it seems to me that comrade Douglas is guilty of tail-ending the bourgeoisie’s profit driven ‘road-mania’, with all its environmental and ecological consequences.

It almost goes without saying that communists, unlike some Greens, are not opposed on principle to roads, motorways, by-passes, etc. As Leon Trotsky was fond of saying, there is a time and a place for everything. It is just a question of deciding what the correct time and place is. Surely it is clear that clogging up the country with more and more motorways is just not practical, or *rational*, no matter how convenient it may be for Vernon and his desperately important job.

As it says in the ‘What we fight for’ column, “pollution and the environment are class questions”. Comrade Douglas’s crude workerism does not recognise this, of course. Communism is not ‘dependent’ on what this or that worker thinks (ie, comrade Douglas!), or a section of the working class (ie, construction workers!), or even the working class as a whole. It is based upon what is *necessary*, for the development of humanity: ie, giving leadership to the *whole* of society.

Comrade Douglas’s ‘super-roadism’ is no solution: it is part of the problem. The central issue here is that the current ‘road-mania’ is an integral part of the government’s privatisation process and its relentless drive to cut public spending. Therefore, communists should not be afraid to lend their *critical* support to ‘anti-motorway’ campaigns. Indeed, it is imperative that we be there to give it a *scientific* direction, as opposed to a quasi-mystical one.

Bob Fowler
Leeds

Motorway madness

I respond to express my dismay at Vernon Douglas’s comments (Letters February 16). They strike me as in the style of the old macho Stalinist: horny handed, son-of-toil contempt for anything ‘soft’, compassionate or

‘liberal’. So it was that such people defended the slaughter of the whale by the manly and practical USSR against the soft and sentimental anti-whale lobby.

What must be nailed is the lie that people who see environmental issues as important are somehow less clued up than those who can only recognise practical, common sense, bread and butter issues like wages. To a communist the two are inextricably linked.

It is not a question of animals over people, or vice versa - or progress over conservation: it is a humanitarian and progressive relationship between all the factors of our existence.

On the question of “industrial” development, comrade, humanity long ago reached the stage where our existing industrial development can feed, clothe and house the world in a balance with nature. It is the existence of capitalism which prevents rationalisation to ensure the survival of impoverished peoples and threatened species, not the need for still more industrial development - god help us.

As to roads and individual modes of transport like the private car against that of mass organised transport systems, the arguments are really so clear as to need no repetition here.

The motorway is inherently dangerous, wilfully destructive and totally unnecessary. Vernon may well like riding in his car, but it is becoming a luxury we are all having to pay for and which in terms of damage to the environment we cannot afford. Suppose everyone of driving age in Britain wanted to ride in his/her car: suppose even current ratios of car driving applied to China or India - the whole thing becomes globally disastrous.

The private car, like the ownership of money itself, only works if some can have it while most cannot. Can any rational person say getting in a train in Doncaster alongside hundreds of other people travelling at 200 plus miles an hour in clean, relatively safe and environmentally friendly transport is not better than 600/700 individuals in separate cars of various style and ages, driven by people of mixed skills and abilities, travelling at high speed in close proximity to each other in variable weather conditions?

Roads and private transport are not the answer. As a *communist*, I oppose the further extension of roads.

Dave Douglass
South Yorkshire

Note: Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed.

Hackney CP wins support

“AT BEST, the current campaign that is coming together in support of retaining Labour’s clause four is a diversion. It distracts the attention of socialists from the task of building a party that can really take on the Tories and their capitalist system. At worst, it is positively dangerous, as it spreads the illusion that the Labour Party - of all things - can actually be that party.”

This was how Mark Fischer controversially introduced Hackney Communist Party’s ‘debate’ on clause four on February 16 - a meeting originally scheduled to feature Diane Abbott MP for

the ‘defence’. Ms Abbott however - after confirming her attendance in writing - pulled out just before the day and offered no replacement.

Nevertheless, the meeting was a success for the branch, with thirty five people - new and old faces included - attending. Two new supporters signed up on the night and many others expressed interest and sympathy. The branch will shortly be producing a full new programme of public meetings, branch educationals and activities. Watch this space for details.

Andy Hannah
Branch secretary

Fighting fund

Congratulations to Brent branch for pulling out the stops and raising over £500 this week. It shows what can be done and what needs to be done if the Party is to meet its political targets.

In April the Scottish local elections take place. The Tories appear to be on the way out, but neither Labour nor

the Scottish nationalists are the way forward for the working class. A vigorous campaign will be needed if the Communist Party is to make any impact on events.

We need to start raising money for it now.

Phil Kent

Nurses condemn 1% pay insult

Unison rep, Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital

Once again, instead of giving an across-the-board rise, they are trying to shift the burden onto local managers. The aim of course is to divide us - local mechanisms are not even set up. You will get nurses doing the same work as somebody next door for less money. It is not a question of *us* being in a strong position. We should not even be considering local negotiations at this stage. There may not be a big groundswell right now, but my own feeling is that some sort of industrial action will come out of it.

Cicely Palmer, Putney Hospital Unison rep

The offer is an insult and a disgrace. Even the RCN is rebelling. ‘Take it or leave it’ is the government’s attitude. They know that people are afraid for their jobs and, with us, patients come first, so striking is a problem.

Gerry Bradley, Hammersmith Hospital Unison rep

We weren’t surprised at the pay offer, knowing this government. While I would prefer nationally organised negotiations, my members have bills to pay - and they are among the lowest paid. So a local deal could prove better for us here in the short term -

Inflation robbery

ACCORDING to the *Financial Times* wages in 1993 rose by 1.3%, while inflation rose by 1.5%. Last year the figures were 1.9% and 3% respectively. The Bank of England predicts that underlying inflation will rise to between 2.5% and 3% during 1995. However, this specifically excludes the effect of Vat and interest rate rises, which have a disproportionate effect on the middle sections of the working class. The bank is itself recommending further increases in interest rates if unemployment falls.

In the sixties and seventies the organised strength of the working class succeeded in pushing up real wages, even though the employers continually forced up prices in an attempt to negate this. During this period we had effectively negative interest rates, resulting in many workers being able to free themselves of debt. Today interest rates in real terms are extremely high, so substantially reducing our real wages.

Although inflation can result in robbery of the working class on a grand scale, international bankers take a dim view of it (not of course because they are opposed to such robbery). The move towards a common European currency makes financiers and the large transnationals very nervous of currency instability.

Tom May

NatWest made £1.5 billion profit last year. Directors are to pocket six-figure bonuses worth about 30% of their salary. On the other hand 5,000 counter staff face a pay freeze. Most pay increases will be below the rate of inflation. Another 4,000 jobs are expected to be axed this year.



Organise to fight back together

particularly if the RCN changes its no-strike policy. We have more experience than the managers, with a 25-year history of union cooperation.

Dave Gray, Hammersmith Hospital RCN rep

In view of this pay insult, my own opinion is that we should ballot to have the strike weapon in our armoury. We need three percent across the board - for everybody from Glasgow to Cornwall. But I can’t see a position where the members would not want local negotiations. As Gerry has said, we work together here: we’re in a very strong position.

Pauline Flores, St Mary’s, London Unison rep

The nurses are not happy - I hope they will ballot for a strike. I myself was made redundant when the department was restructured, but I am still working for the union. We have lost some good Unison nurses and

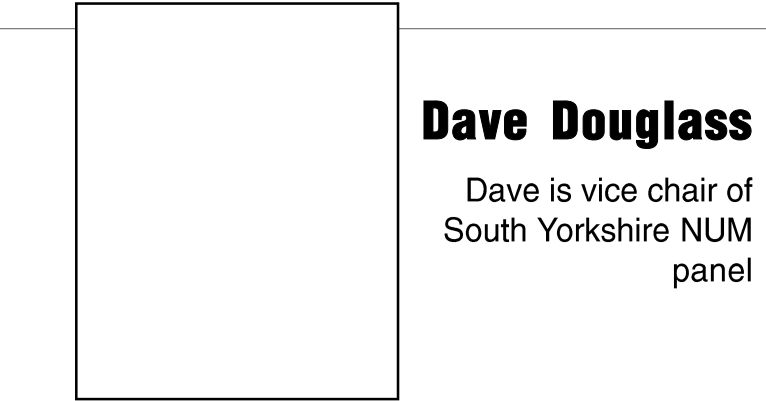
good negotiators have been made redundant. We need strong action, organised nationally.

Joyce Conway, Greenwich Hospital union convener

Everybody has the right to more than an abysmal one percent, but people are just obsessed with keeping their job as we are faced with total closure here. Our plans and hopes lie in making a new start at the Queen Elizabeth.

John Loxley, Whipps Cross Hospital Unison rep

No-one was expecting any different. We had hoped that the doctors would still be in the campaign to give us a stronger position, but I think that we will still get industrial action. In our trust the full three percent would equal 100 job losses, so the important thing is to build the campaign, and not get involved in possible local negotiations.



Dave Douglass

Dave is vice chair of South Yorkshire NUM panel

Forcing Richard to budge

WELL, the pleasantries have been exchanged and British Coal has been signed over to RJ Budge Mining. But after a few joint meetings with the NEC of the union and then a full delegates’ meeting with the company, the fat is once more perilously close to the fire.

It seems that Budge will recognise the union, but won’t agree a conciliation scheme to do so. Neither will the company agree to sit down and debate wages and conditions with the union on this or any other occasion. You get what you’re given - in this case a three year pay freeze.

Time off for union duties by branch officials has been hinted at, but nothing in terms of actually being given a day off. Likewise union facilities, reluctantly allowed on most British Coal establishments, have yet to be secured. So, yes - they will ‘recognise’ the union. They just don’t intend to take any notice of it.

Salt is being ground into the wound by the decision of Mr Budge to receive a 23% increase on his own salary on the day of privatisation, taking his salary to £290,000 a year, plus £50,000 in bonuses - you can’t live on a basic wage, can you?

His own share in the company now stands at 11 million, so one can’t be too careful. It could however become a house of cards. The NUM, small and battered though it is, is not here taking on a state company with bottomless coffers. RJB is standing on the very brink of a financial precipice. If the company has misread the mood of the workforce in this very delicate transition period of stocks and shares and market fluctuations, he may reap a whirlwind.

The die is not yet cast and RJB have at this stage promised to reconsider the position which wasn’t “cast in stone”. A ballot result will have to be worked for despite the genuine disappointment, widespread across Budge’s collieries. A victory at this stage for the NUM would be just what is needed to restore flagging spirits and some shortfall in membership renewal.

PS - Does this mean I don’t get the job?

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, February 26 1920

For justice sake

AT THE Coalville Petty Sessions the other day a nine-year old boy was sentenced to four strokes of the birch for - stealing an egg.

That impossible wage

THE MOST expensive wrap of the season is said to have been purchased by Mary Miles Minter, an actress, for £7,000, or nearly 30 times the annual income of a docker working six days a week, with-out a break throughout the year at a wage (16 shillings a day) which, according to the employers, would cripple the transport industry. [Note: 16 shillings = 80p]

C · P · G · B
Y · E · A · R · S
JULY 31 1920
JULY 31 1995

Bring down the bosses' barriers

WHENEVER the issue of immigration arises, the Labour Party never fails to reveal its own national chauvinism. Jacques Santer last week promised that the commission would use legal powers to achieve a frontier-free EU. In response the shadow home secretary Jack Straw sided fully with John Major in calling for the government to veto any attempt by the commission to force Britain to relinquish border controls.

Attempting to beat the Tories at their own game is of course nothing new for Labour. Only last Wednesday Blair claimed the mantle of one nation Toryism, saying: "One nation politics no longer fits the Tories. It is draped rightly and properly round our shoulders. A divided country is not a strong country and this country is divided."

The leadership's attempts to be more nationalistic than the Tories are particularly nauseating. Echoing the

xenophobic tabloid press, Straw warned that British loss of control of its immigration policy would harm race relations and stated: "Our position has always been that the issue of border controls and immigration policies must be for the UK government alone to determine and not for European institutions."

He cited the 'uniqueness' of Britain as a reason for opting out of the abolition of border controls: "We are an island; we have a different history." As part of his hard-man act, Straw strongly criticised Labour MEPs and the Socialist Group in the European parliament. They have expressed opposition to the government's insistence on maintaining national passport controls and, even more disastrously for the Labour Party leadership, continue to support free movement across borders, not just for EU citizens but

also for legally resident immigrants.

No wonder that Straw has decided to crack down on his unruly and dissident MEPs, who must be a bit of an embarrassment to the 'rightist' new Labourites. As the *Independent on Sunday* aptly put it, "The truth is that Mr Straw and Mr Blair are terrified of being thought soft on immigration...As a consequence, people will not vote Labour" (February 19).

Immigration controls and a so-called Fortress Europe have nothing to do with the myth of overcrowding: they are designed to criminalise migrant workers, who are used as cheap labour. Discrimination and the threat of deportation keep wages low and divide the working class through undermining the possibility of trade union organisation. We are for the abolition of *all* immigration controls.

Frank Vincent

Mandela warns of 'anarchy'

NELSON Mandela's opening address to the South African parliament last week should sound warning notes to all in the workers' movement.

Adopting the standard bourgeois tactic of appealing to the 'common good' against the 'anarchic minority', he warned workers that their aspirations just could not be met. "The government literally does not have the money to meet the demands that are being advanced. Mass action of any kind will not create resources the government does not have."

What are these demands that the state cannot afford? Living conditions have not changed for the vast majority since the ANC's election victory last April. Millions of workers are unemployed and homeless, eking out their lives in the squalor of squatter camps, while those in work who have attempted to force up wages have been met on the streets by continued brutal acts of police suppression.

"It is important that we rid ourselves of the culture of entitlement," Mandela

declares. He is not of course referring to the luxurious lifestyles enjoyed by the bourgeoisie and other privileged sections. He means those very workers who *know* they are "entitled" to just the basic means of survival - a home and a job. They must live as best as they can, through whatever means.

But Mandela does not accept they have any right to take what is necessary for survival: "Criminals are being favoured while the interests of society are being ignored," he alleges. All he can offer the poor are the usual bourgeois platitudes: "There are signs that our economy is beginning to pick up."

We have long warned that South African workers' aspirations cannot be met within capitalism. And now we give another warning. Unless communists begin now to organise *against* the bourgeois state, whether it is fronted by black or white faces, they will once more be the first to feel the full force of repressive terror, as capitalism drifts again towards revolutionary crisis.

Jim Blackstock

Anglo-Irish anti-climax

THE UNVEILING under the full glare of publicity of the *New framework for agreement* came as something of an anti-climax this week.

It is of course, as both the British and Irish governments have made clear, merely a discussion document, but it is very likely to provide the basis for a future settlement.

Both countries are to renounce their claims to permanent sovereignty over the Six Counties - Ireland through a change in its constitution, and Britain through repealing the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. As expected, a new assembly is proposed for Northern Ireland, and cross-border quangos to run services which span the border are to be set up.

The imperialists have clearly learnt much from the South African 'peace process' - bending over backwards to appear as accommodating as possible to

all the major players in order to keep them in the game, even if that means changing the rules as it proceeds.

The most troublesome players up to now have been the mainstream unionist parties. James Molyneux for the Official Unionists called the document "a major part of the problem instead of a basis for solution", while Ian Paisley said it was a declaration of war on the union.

This 'hard-line opposition' appeared to bear no relationship to the feelings of most loyalists. Just half a dozen supporters demonstrated outside Hillsborough Castle, where John Major and the Irish premier John Bruton met.

The Irish 'peace process' will continue to edge forward with imperialism firmly in control. Consequently what is for certain, is that the settlement will not meet the needs of workers in the Six Counties.

Alan Fox

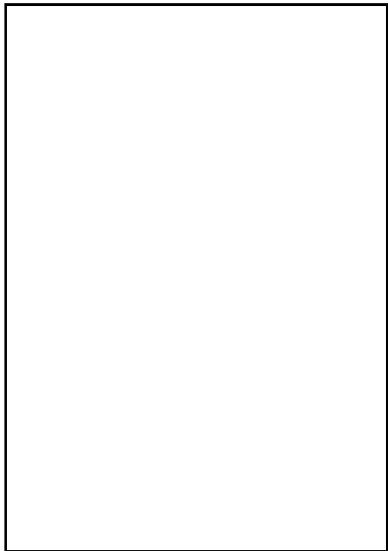
Major fails to prevent Euro-war escalation

THE FAULT lines in the Tory Party became even more visible over the last week, as Euro 'phobes' and 'philes' continued to slug it out. On Tuesday Douglas Hurd warned that failure to maintain a Cabinet "truce" over Europe would dash any hopes of re-election.

Major's pandering to the Eurosceptic rightwing has had its effect on the left of the party, with Kenneth Clarke refusing to shut up despite threats and Europe's trade commissioner, Leon Brittan joining the fray to add weight to the left backlash.

Hurd's plea and Major's failed attempts to ban discussion on Europe show just how weak the Tories are. In contrast there is not a squeak of discontent being expressed from Labour's shadow cabinet as Blair 'modernises' the party. They have election victory in their sights and are willing to keep quiet rather than do anything to jeopardise it.

The Tories 'position' on Europe hardly inspires confidence among business leaders either. The (at best) confusing and (at worst) chauvinist sloganeering of the Tories is hardly a longterm strategy for economic growth that can rally the population. The Tories do not even have an agreed attitude to the single currency, which is due to commence in just two years time.



John Major: leader of a deeply divided party

Anyone in business will know that Europe *is* becoming a united trading power from which Britain cannot afford to be isolated. National chauvinist rhetoric may placate the rightwing Tory bigots and save Major's skin for the time being, but it is not a strategy for 'making Britain great again' that can be believed in.

Helen Ellis

What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs, ie communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party's publications; contributes regularly to the Party's funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

I want to be a Communist Party supporter. Send me details. ☐

I wish to subscribe to the *Weekly Worker*. ☐

WW subscription £ _____

Donation £ _____

Cheques and postal orders should be in sterling.

	6 m	1yr	Institutions
Britain & Ireland	£7.50	£15	£25
Europe	£10	£20	£35
Rest of World	£14	£28	£40

Special offer to new subscribers: 3 months for £3.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL _____

Return to: CPGB, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 081-459 7146 Fax: 081-830 1639.

Printed by and published by: November Publications Ltd (081-459 7146). Registered as a newspaper by Royal Mail. ISSN 1351-0150. © February 1995

Interview

Veteran South African communist leader, Harry Gwala, talked to Peter Manson

SACP must become a real Party

WHAT MUST be understood in the present context is that we have a bourgeois democratic revolution, led by intellectuals and the middle class, but not yet by the working class. Before we can reach that stage, a lot needs to be done. We should not look at the bourgeois democratic revolution in a static manner.

The overwhelming majority of the people is made up of the urban and rural poor, and all the measures that can be taken by the present government will not meet the needs of the people. We have a bourgeois parliament, operating to bourgeois norms.

Although the government has called for restraint, strikes continue, because the process of democratisation and the needs of the people have not yet been met. As long as

that is the case, people are going to continue struggling for real change in the country.

I don't think we have reached the point of breaking with the government yet. We have built this bourgeois democracy around characters, around certain individuals. Until we destroy that myth, any criticism will appear to be against an individual and not against the system. We must get our people away from that.

If you take the question of the Communist Party, I think it must become a real party of the working class. It must come back to its roots - those of Marxism-Leninism - the vanguard of the working people of this country, not just another organisation.

CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
M77
MOUNTS

School students take on Wimpey

THE M77 protests at Pollok Park, Glasgow took a decidedly proletarian turn last week when local youths forced the contractors to stop work on this unnecessary motorway extension.

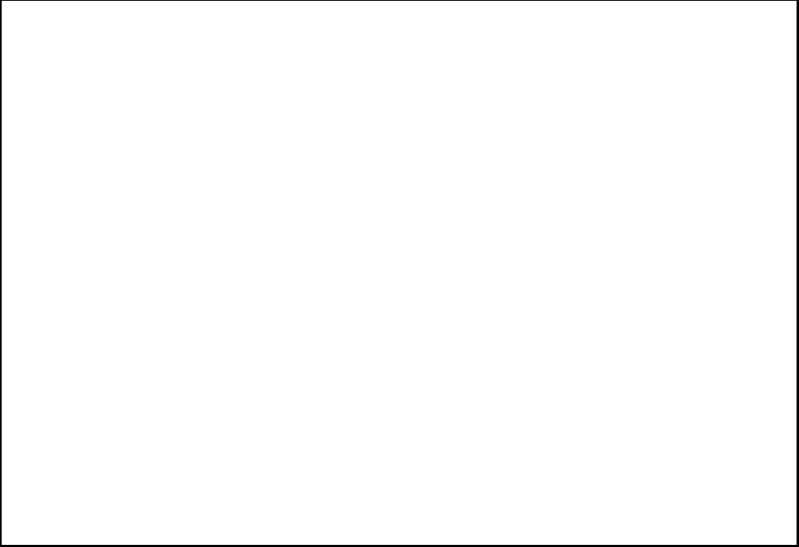
The protesters at 'Pollok Free State' were confronted with 350 police and security guards. When two of the leaders, Lincoln Keenan and Ian Boyle, were arrested, the protest looked all but over.

Then around 500 school pupils from the local Bellarmine secondary school skipped classes and swarmed all over the site, rendering the contractors, Wimpey Construction, helpless.

The pupils were joined by dozens of adults from the Pollok estate and it was then that about 50 of the 150 security guards threw away their helmets and joined the protesters.

Local working class people do not want this extension because they believe it is dangerously close to their homes and will ruin one of the very few recreational facilities in the area.

The battle has been closely linked to the campaign against the Criminal Justice Act and it has developed into a fight between the state, big business and a local community.



Citizens of Pollok Free State relax between confrontations

Saturday's illegal 'defiance demonstration' against the CJA will end up at the 'Pollok Free State' and will be an opportunity to link the Pollok Park protest with broader issues facing workers in Britain today.

Mary Ward

Demonstrate!

Mass demonstration against the M77 on Saturday February 25. March from Glasgow city centre at 12 noon to 'Pollok Free State'

Sport as a weapon

THE BATTLE which erupted at Lansdowne Road during the England versus Eire friendly was condemned by the same journalists and politicians who make it their business under normal circumstances to whip up national chauvinism and defence of 'our' nation against international competition both on and off the football pitch.

The link between national chauvinism and football - and for that matter sport in general - is nothing new. Sport on a world scale has been used to cohere nations and set worker against worker in wagging the flag for their team.

It is more than a little hypocritical then that the bourgeois press can bemoan the chauvinism and violence of England fans when they have invested

so much time and energy whipping up hysteria against Irish freedom fighters.

Terrified to own the monster they have unleashed, commentators instead blamed the BNP and Combat 18, as if these tiny groups of fascist thugs could have been responsible for all the violence on the day.

The real fact is that chauvinist and xenophobic English fans went along with the violence which may well have been initiated by these thugs. They allowed them to display their banners, give out their leaflets and shout their slogans unchallenged.

These are dispossessed white working class youth made unemployed or on poverty wages at the hands of capitalism. It is this barbaric system

which treats human beings as so much fodder which is to blame for the violence and perverted morality it promotes. In the absence of any alternative working class movement, those on the receiving end try to muster some pride for themselves in pathetic and desperate extreme nationalism.

Workers need their own alternative vision in sport, as in everything else. That means sport which develops human ability to the full, not perverts it in the name of big business and the nation state. We know if declassed workers can be mobilised so easily to fight for the bosses' nation state in the football ground, the same would be true if it came to a bosses' war.

Linda Addison

Workers' action forces French climbdown

FRENCH prime minister and presidential candidate Edouard Balladur was this week embroiled in a phone tapping scandal. However much this may turn out to damage his chances in this spring's election, it is clear that he has already suffered a second major defeat in a year over the question of education cuts.

In January 1994 100,000 workers and students demonstrated against his proposals to switch more government funding away from the state sector into private education, and the proposals

were hurriedly withdrawn.

Throughout 1994 the government attempted piecemeal changes, but matters came to a head at the start of this year as the government threatened the implementation of the Laurent Report, which included large scale cuts and huge rises in student registration fees.

On February 7 a strike led by the FSU teachers' union met with an enthusiastic response at all levels of the education system and that, combined with big student strikes and demonstrations,

forced Balladur to retreat again.

Leading FSU militant René Barthes told us: "The bourgeoisie needs to adapt the education system to the present requirements of the monopolies. But the working class has shown it is not prepared to to submit to the government's call for a more 'realist' attitude."

French workers have shown that mass action can force retreats, particularly when the government itself is under pressure.

Peter Manson

Build solidarity with sacked busworkers

Bill Horslen, one of the sacked busworkers from Chelmsford, reports on the Badgerline group delegate conference of the Transport and General Workers Union

BUSWORKERS from the Badgerline group gathered for what was a very positive conference last Wednesday. Over 100 delegates represented workers from around the country and were agreed on the need to respond to the challenge given by management to workers at Chelmsford who were sacked last June. All delegates pledged to go back to their branches to win support for Chelmsford.

We began a tour of Badgerline garages in Bristol, Swansea, Birmingham and Yorkshire, asking for solidarity action to win our jobs back. We know that while we can organise levies, etc, this alone will not win the dispute. We need to take a leaf out of the postal workers' book and take actual solidarity action.

Most delegates were very positive about the idea of taking action. The only ones who weren't were those from our own fleet at Eastern National in Braintree, Clacton and Colchester garages. They actually felt that the 10 minibuses we are running were jeopardising *their* jobs.

We had to point out to them that Badgerline directors have already closed three garages: they've sold off Chelmsford, Clacton and Bishop Stortford bus stations. This is not because of our 10 minibuses, but because of the asset stripping of the Badgerline group. They should be fearing the actions of Badgerline directors, not Chelmsford busworkers.

But apart from this small section of the conference I was very heartened by the whole thing. There was a real recognition that if they did not support Chelmsford workers, management would just railroad over them when their turn came.

The conference agreed that what we need to do now is to get the widespread support of members around the country, which is what the tour is about.

I put a motion for a ballot of all Badgerline group members for industrial action and a one-day strike to take place on March 25. The view was that it was a bit premature to do that. We need to work on members more before we put it to a ballot so that we have more certainty of winning it. At the moment we don't think we would win it, and if we lost a ballot we would have nowhere to go from there.

Of course in the meantime we have to keep the morale up in Chelmsford as well and keep pressure on the company.

We have a problem at the moment because the company has gone to the police to keep us out of the bus lanes and there seems to be little way of challenging that, apart from registering our services.

We are stopped from serving the main bus stops in the town centre which obviously diminishes our impact a great deal. What we are doing is talking to the passengers who certainly have sympathy with us so that we can give them alternative pick-ups. We can get very close to these stops, so it's just a question of letting people know where we are.

Brentwood garage is keen to get us running services there and I am trying to arrange larger vehicles that are one-person operated, so we can free some drivers to go to Brentwood, which is about 18 miles down the road from us.

It is a Thamesway (sister company of Eastern National) garage and is threatened with closure with a loss of 125 jobs. The drivers are so fed up with the treatment they are receiving from management that they are just not turning up for work and the company is only running about half of its services. The delegate at Brentwood is therefore keen for us to take our example down there.

Discontent runs high among busworkers, whose conditions in some areas are appalling. Time spent on the road is worse than it is at Chelmsford. The main issue of safety that we are raising with our dispute is relevant to the whole industry. But of course it affects all workers, as the right to strike is again threatened.

March 8: Meeting with TGWU parliamentary group of 33 sponsored MPs
March 25: Demonstration in Chelmsford. Speakers include John Monks, Michael Meacher and Bill Morris
April 5: Parliamentary lobby, meeting in the Grand Committee Room
Regular strike committee meetings on Tuesday night in the Railway Club
A national demonstration on driver fatigue is planned for London in June

Other Badgerline companies

Bristol City Line, Midland Red West, Reynard Buses, Target Travel, West Yorkshire, York City and District, Yorkshire Rider, Quickstep Travel of Leeds, South Wales Transport, Brewer Ltd, United Welsh Coaches, Potteries Motor Traction/Crosville, Linkline Coaches, Paramount Leisure, Red Rider, Thamesway, Wessex Coaches, Western National, Plumpton Coaches

Compassion for humans?

BRIGITTE BARDOT did not attend an animal rights demonstration in Cherbourg, France last weekend, where such marches had previously been unknown.

However, she certainly generated a lot of publicity at Jill Phipps' funeral in Coventry Cathedral on February 14, even if only by her inane comment that "Jill will go down in history as the Joan of Arc of veal."

British journalism, so obsessed with sex and celebrity, 'forgot' to mention that Bardot's husband is a member of Jean le Pen's fascist National Front. Remember le Pen's remark about the Nazi death camps being a mere detail of history? Ms Bardot would perhaps have chosen another man if veal calves had gone to the gas chambers. But human life is apparently not so important.

Arthur Lawrence