

SACKED WORKERS SUPPORT CONFERENCE

On the 25th July, the HWAG participated in a conference of sacked workers and various struggle support groups held in Manchester. This conference represents a very important discussion forum for militant workers.

It began with workers from various struggles sharing their experiences of the abandonment of the struggle by the unions (perceived by most people as the leaderships) and affirmed the need for building organisational links for establishing mutual support between workers in struggle.

The second part of the conference tried to define its aims around a broad-ranging discussion document (presented by the Gateshead Workers Support Group as a resolution) which led to debate about whether it is possible to operate within and hence win over the official union machinery, whether the fight was against the Tories or against all the political

For further information:

GWSG, [redacted] Newcastle upon Tyne, [redacted]

parties which manage the capitalist system at local as well as national level and on how to make the conference more cohesive in defining some kind of constitution with criteria for affiliation with its own bulletin.

At the end there was voting against the affiliation of political groups to the conference and in favour of a demonstration at the TUC conference but the discussion of aims was deferred until the next conference.

Unfortunately the most important task of drawing up perspectives for the class to go beyond the long drawn-out isolated struggles in which many of the participants had been involved, towards a more extensive and unified movement was set to one side for the concern to define its constitution and activity. It should be pushed for next time. All workers who want to discuss the important questions facing the class struggle in Britain should attend the conference on November 1st.

S.T.

This bulletin needs articles, information and donations from YOU to survive.

The bulletin costs at least £30 per issue to produce and print.

Contact us at :

Healthworkers Action Group,
c/o Freedom Press,
84b Whitechapel High Street,
London E1 7QX.

The Healthworkers Action Group holds regular meetings in London to exchange information and views and to organise support for healthworkers.

Our next meeting is at :

Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square,
Holborn,
London WC1.

On Tuesday 1st September at 7.30pm.

We encourage and support other healthworkers around the country to set up similar groups.

WHERE WE STAND

We are :

FOR maximum solidarity between workers within the health service and with workers in other industries especially those in dispute.

FOR a minimum wage of £150 for a 35 hour week.

FOR increased and safe staffing levels. Levels to be determined by workers not management.

AGAINST unpaid overtime.

AGAINST all cuts in services.

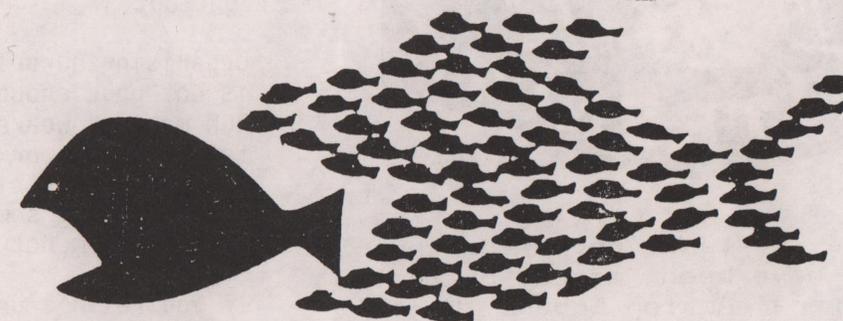
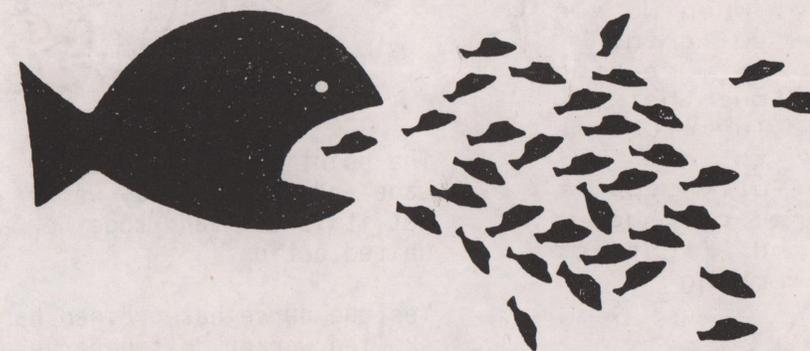
AGAINST privatisation and in-house tenders within the N.H.S.

FOR healthworkers to organise around the above issues at meetings in paid worktime.

Thanks for the donations so far.
Z of Scotland £5; Direct Action Movement £10; Collection £5.

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AUGUST 1987 No.1

HEALTHWORKERS BULLETIN



WELCOME!

This is the first edition of the Healthworkers Bulletin. We plan to produce it regularly. Write to us at the address on the back page if you want to be put on the mailing list or if you want extra copies for your friends.

There is a great deal happening in the health service which goes unnoticed by most healthworkers except those immediately involved. There are strikes, occupations, demonstrations and other industrial action going on all the time: some of it successful, some not. These disputes deserve more publicity and support.

This bulletin aims to bridge the communication gap for healthworkers and to be a springboard for more successful action. The Healthworkers Bulletin is not tied to any trade union or political party but we are committed to the belief that all healthworkers should unite across sectional boundaries to win disputes collectively. When we see other healthworkers suffering reductions in pay or worsening conditions it is obvious that you or I may be next. Therefore we consider an injury to one an injury to all and we fully support healthworkers who are courageous enough to stand up and fight for improved pay and working conditions.



The "Where we stand" points on the back page have been agreed by the Healthworkers Action Group. Most other articles are written in a personal capacity and may or may not represent the overall views of the group. Such articles are initialed.

PAY

How do you feel about the recent pay rise? If you're a student, pupil or an auxillary nurse probably not very happy and if you're an ancillary worker probably furious, ancillary staff have been offered a derisory 4%!! Trained nurses may feel they are better off but thier pay rise leaves more than alot to be desired.

As long as we spend our time worrying about how much more we are getting than the next person we're going to get nowhere. While nurses are looking to see if they took home more than the porters at the end of the month and while one group tries to show how much more they are worth than another, the government is laughing. Yet every year the unions take all our cases to the Pay Review Body, seperately and once again we have been given a few crumbs.



The point is we all deserve a living wage and the only way we're going to get it is to stand together and take united action.

Yes, the nurse has trained hard and as a skilled worker does deserve a much better level of pay than she gets but doesn't the cleaner also have to pay for rent, bills, clothes and food not to mention wanting to go and have a good night out.

Organising ourselves section by section is not good enough so groups like the RCN make us weaker not stronger (as a fellow healthworker said 'the RCN's policy of no strike action is a bit like throwing someone into a river and telling them not to swim!').

If you're in a union try to get it to hold joint union meetings to fight on issues like pay and conditions.

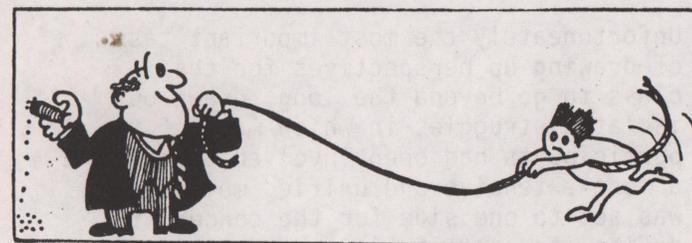
United as workers we are strong.

For a living wage now!

R.R.

Australian Nurses Strike

Late last year over 14,000 nurses went on strike for more money, mainly in the State of Victoria. In Australia, like most developed countries, the government takes advantage of healthworkers and pays relatively low wages and provides poor working conditions.



The dispute was sparked by a reshuffle of the pay structure. The nurses were due a pay rise but instead lost various allowances making them worse off overall. The strike started then escalated when the (Labour) government tried to bring in scabs.

Originally nurses had been on friendly terms with the police on the picket lines, even playing cricket with them. But before long the police showed their true colours by acting as the strikebreaking thugs of the government.

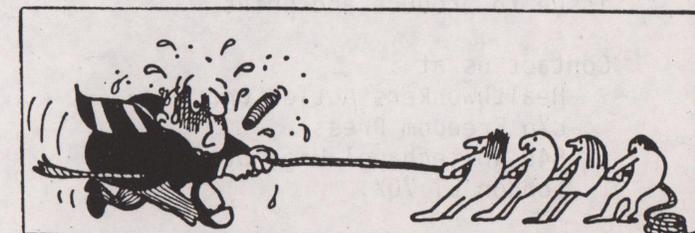
The supply of linen became central to the dispute especially at the Western General and Royal Melbourne hospitals. There police broke up picket lines and dragged away nurses by their hair to allow linen trucks through.

The newspapers announced that the strike was wrong because the nurses would get 200 dollars per week pay rises. This was proved to apply only to a handful of top level nurses. The newspapers never

represented the strikers point of view but consistently printed anti-strike articles by hospital managers, doctors and politicians.

However there was massive public support for the strikers despite media distortion. Nurses marches would be clapped all the way by people on the pavements. "Patient Strike Support Groups" were initiated by the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation which were well received by the strikers and the community in general as they provided moral, physical and financial support. Better still most ancillary workers sided with the nurses and refused to cross picket lines.

When electricity workers, the Building Workers Industrial Union and the local train drivers threatened sympathy action the government hastily made concessions to the nurses for fear of a General Strike. After 7 weeks on strike the nurses got more pay, but the government insisted on worse working conditions for example only one nurse per ward at night.



If the nurses had stayed out a bit longer or got a General Strike they could have got more pay and NO STRINGS. Nevertheless, it was a courageous struggle from which healthworkers in Britain can learn alot.

T.W.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL