

COUNTER INFORMATION

FEB. MARCH 1988

HEALTHY STRIKES

Cash cuts have led to closed wards and shortages of drugs, bandages, bedding and staff. 30,000 nurses leave the N.H.S. every year. Meanwhile waiting lists get longer.

The government is starving the National Health Service of resources. Wages are being eroded by abolishing 'special duty' payments for working unsocial hours and reducing meal allowances.

They want to 'encourage' the privatisation of health and related services. In England and Wales this has led to 20% staff cuts, overwork, overcrowded hospitals and **BIG PROFITS**. In Scotland privatisation is just beginning.

RESISTANCE BEGINS

Resistance began in Feb. 1987 when Ancoats Hospital Manchester, Casualty Dept. was permanently occupied by local people after a closure threat. In Sept. the authorities agreed to keep it open every day 9 am to 9 pm.

As this dispute ended, nurses at the Royal Edinburgh and Gogarburn psychiatric hospitals began

industrial action for more staff. The threat of an indefinite strike produced more nurses.

1988 was barely a week old when nurses at North Manchester General had a 24 hour strike against the abolition of 'special duty' payments which would cost some nurses £40 per week. The crossing of this 'moral barrier' was very important for events to come, although this is *not* the first time nurses have struck [See "Nursing Times" 20.1.88]

The government suspended its pay cut but other health workers had got the message - **STRIKE!**

In response to a cut in their

meals allowance amounting to £50 per month Blood Transfusion workers in Scotland and Yorkshire began a work to rule. Under threat of national action the government dropped its plans on January 14th.

In Lothian and Lanarkshire, Jan 14th saw strikes and demonstrations by health workers against privatisation (The Edinburgh report is based on an interview with a senior staff nurse from the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh (R.I.E.))

At 7.15 am 80 - 100 nurses and domestics gathered at the R.I.E. Despite official union promises not to form a picket, nurses arriving for work joined the demo rather than go in. Some nurses left the wards leaving agency nurses to cover.

SOLIDARITY FOREVER

At 8 am they set off through the city singing all the way. "Solidarity Forever" could be heard down Princes Street as the march grew and traffic was brought to a halt down one side.

Outside the Health Board a crowd of over 2,000 nurses and other health workers from hospitals all over Lothian gathered, elated at the size of the demo.

The announcement that the Health Board had voted to go ahead with the privatisation was greeted with "All out, All out". An ancillary shouted "We'd be better having a sit-in".

Lambie (N.U.P.E.official) urged protestors to return to work and organise. They replied "Resign, Resign" and "All out strike". "The strength of feeling was frightening, if any one the Health Board had come out we would have lynched them".

Some nurses decided to march back down Princes Street. The idea spread but police blocked the way. "Ten of us walked to the front with the banner..... they weren't going to stop us". A crowd moved on to the road and held up the cars. "Police forced us onto the pavement". They continued like that on and off the road until a group went to the Scottish Office. There was some confusion. "People just wanted to stay out, anger was so high".

They stayed for 10 minutes and then dispersed. The police did not intervene.

One the same day 900 nurses and ancillary workers at Hartwood psychiatric

hospital, Lanarkshire had a 24 hour strike.

MORE STRIKES

Since then there have been strikes nearly every day in hospitals in Lothian, involving nurses, ancillaries, domestics, porters, drivers and caterers. Many of these were in support of other workers.

In England, staff at the Craiglea Nursing Home, Gateshead, struck to support patients rights and there have been strikes by psychiatric nurses in Southampton and at Winwick in Cheshire (Britain's biggest psychiatric hospital. (see supplement for more details])

The trade union leaders are worried about the number of wildcats and are attempting to channel discontent into 'days of [in] action' Sit-ins and occupations may prove to be the best way to wrest control of public health from the hands of bosses of all kinds.

Health service workers are clearly prepared for further action and are organising to defend each other. Edinburgh nurses have produced a 'No Scabbing' leaflet with help from Lothian Claimants Union and Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre.

Picket

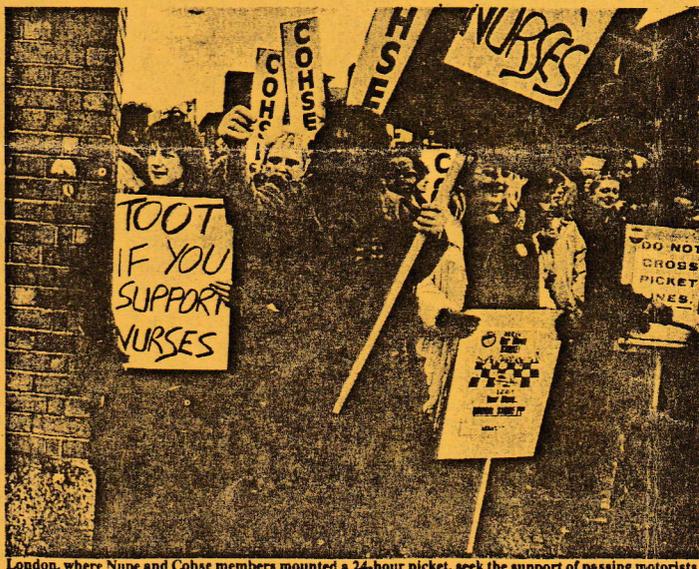
The week ending 5th February saw thousands of health workers, in over 20 towns from Aberdeen to Southampton, taking strike action. On 3rd February a picket of nurses from Wakefield persuaded Frickley miners to strike in solidarity with the health workers.

AUTO STOP

Despite attempts by union officials to stop it, an all-out strike at Ford U.K. is now on.

After repeated wildcat stoppages and rejection of the management's "final offer" of a 7% wage increase this year and 2% above inflation in 1989 and 1990, an all out strike was planned for February 1st. This was stopped by union negotiators just hours before midnight when management offered ½% extra in 1989 and 1990.

Night shift workers at Dagenham walked out anyway, returning on Wednesday 3rd to vote. The deal was rejected. The workers position is strong as all Ford engines for Europe are made in the U.K. and company stocks are low.



London, where Nupe and Cohse members mounted a 24-hour picket, seek the support of passing motorists.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

THE WINTER of discontent that erupted in early December in the occupied Palestinian zones has continued despite the sustained repression by the Zionist military.

The mass support for the riots, stayaways from work and consumer strikers in Gaza and the West Bank has focussed world attention on the basic policies of the expansionist State of Israel.

In the congested, squalid camps of the Gaza Strip, with 650,000 inhabitants, the street unrest escalated from December 9th onwards. The response of the military was to use live ammunition faced with barricades, stone throwing youths and demonstrations of women. With 80 deaths in this way, the reaction of the Zionist Coalition Government was to change the 'iron fist'!

For mid January 1988 a systematic policy of night raids and severe beatings using truncheons and rifle butts was followed in the fifteen camps and towns subject to curfew.

Despite each wave of repression and the internment of 2,000 people from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the street unrest and mood of defiance has remained. 800 schools have closed.

"WE ARE THE SOWETANS"

Local committees have sprung up, aided by a clandestine radio station, 'Al Quds' and involving rather than being subservient to PLO and Islamic Jihad militants. The radio station in late January switched to broadcasting the names of 'collaborators' who have opened their businesses. The Israeli authorities have been trying to drive a wedge between the young and the elders, some of whom have been bussed from Gaza camps to sweatshops in Tel Aviv.

There is a distinct parallel with the methods of the apartheid regime in South Africa, with a civil rights activist describing Gaza as 'the Soweto of the Middle East'.

The 'West' (with 3bn. dollars donated annually by U.S. Jewish supporters of Israel) is lobbying for an Israeli Labour Party plan of 'autonomy' for Gaza and the West Bank, confederated to Jordan but the 70,000 settlers are being used as a spearhead by other Zionists to consolidate the occupation of 51% of West Bank territory.

The strategy of the Palestinians is to prolong the disturbances as long as possible, shifting the centre of protest according to the intensity of repression. At this juncture a more critical perception of the PLO and Islamic Fundamentalist leadership will have to await their drawing into political negotiation rather than serving as the symbols of resistance.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

Since Counter Information 17, we have heard that the squatters in Haffenstrasse, Hamburg, have signed a contract with the local mayor agreeing to take down barricades surrounding the squat which includes steel doors, NATO wire on roof etc.

However, as our roving reporter says "After huge demonstrations and messages of support from throughout the world - Haffenstrasse lives! Despite many dubious manoeuvres and bad decisions the street continues to live as it has always done - as it decides itself!

N.B. German govt. is trying to outlaw the wearing of masks and helmets at demo's.

A protest rally was held and a group turned up wearing only black masks and helmets!

Hope it wasn't too cold!!

ITALY

AIRPORT and railway workers in Italy are defying unions, bosses and government. Late January saw workers staging more one and two day stoppages. Rome airport and the entire rail network was hit as the months-long battle for better wages and conditions continues.

The railway workers are organising through grassroots committees - *comitati di base* or *COBAS* - outside the traditional trade unions.

An engine driver from Milan describes how they operate:

"There are assemblies in the railway depots in which the workers discuss their problems.. The depot assemblies elect representatives who take part in the Regional Technical Co-ordinating Group. In their turn the Regional Co-ordinating Groups elect two reps who go to make up the National Technical Co-ordinating Group. Thirty delegates in all, whose tasks are mainly technical because the decisions are taken in the depots." (Operai Contro Nov. 1987)

Through the grassroots control of their struggle the engine drivers are fighting for more wages, plus better health and safety, more time-off and for two drivers per locomotive.

Originating in the teachers' strikes last year, the growing grassroots workers committees are worrying the authorities. The coalition government is discussing new laws to limit strikes.

Meanwhile the trade union leaders denounce the grassroots committees, try and stop the strikes, and actually propose new anti-strike laws to the government!

GRASSROOTS REVOLT

GERHARD Cromme, the head of Krupp Steel, has drawn the hatred of 5,300 steelworkers since it became known at the end of November that he wants to close the Rheinhausen plant in Duisberg.

Shops and cars in the town displayed posters: 'Wanted, Dr. Gerhard Cromme, Dead or Alive, for Murder at the site of Rheinhausen'.

On the 7th December the steelworkers broke into

BENTLEY BASHES BOARD

A Doncaster miner reports on the strike which swept through the Yorkshire coalfield from 4 - 10th January:

Since the end of the 84/85 strike the Doncaster coalfield has been in more or less continuous conflict over local issues as well as periodic all out strikes for the sacked men. This latest dispute at Bentley revolved around a heavy handed management insisting on who would work in a particular new tunnel.

Men were unfairly taken off the job, thereby losing money. This was unacceptable and after tossing it around at conciliation meetings the men decided to stop the pit.

Only two days passed before the Bentley men were calling on their fellow Doncaster miners; sometimes only three per pit were necessary to stop the whole of Doncaster within one shift.

From 10th - 13th November protestors successfully blockaded Europe's largest nuclear power station construction site at Montalto di Castro in Tuscany Italy.

NO ROAD TO MARRAKESH

AN occupation by 1,000 miners in Northern France took place on 30th November. The colliery offices in Douai were occupied trapping two Directors inside as the emigre miners protested against the 'Pache' plan to use inducements to expel them to a life of unemployment or persecution in Morocco. The C.G.T. Union negotiated a compromise which was hailed as a 'victory', but not removing the 'French jobs for French workers' basis of the Government proposals.

Krupp Steel's headquarters in Bochum. They raced up 10 flights of stairs after guards had cut off power to the lifts, crashed through a fire door and occupied the boardroom. They didn't manage to see Cromme so they left - but not before tucking into his lunch!

On December 10th 250,000 steelworkers and miners throughout the Ruhr demonstrated in support of the Rheinhausen men. The miners occupied bridges over the Rhine and cut off road traffic to Duisburg, the largest steel city in West Germany.

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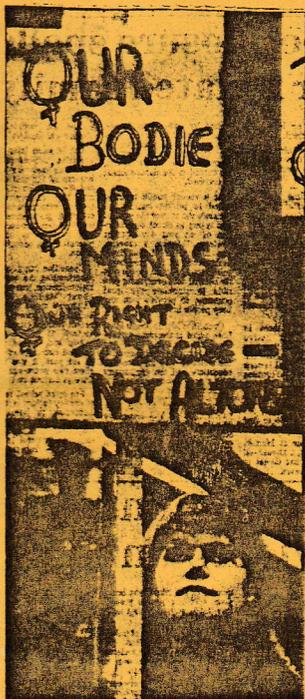
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A demonstrator at a Glasgow Rally against the Abortion Bill of Liberal M.P., David Alton. Other mass demonstrations such as in London mobilised against the restrictions advocated by the S.P.U.C. Lobby to reduce the 28 weeks time limit.

PHILIPINE PICKET

An internationally co-ordinated picket against the sex trafficking of Filipinos was staged in front of the Dept. of Foreign Affairs Office in Manila on November 25th. This was the International Day of Protest Against All Forms of Violence Against Women.

One woman who survived and escaped this trafficking spoke at the rally. She explained how she accepted a job as a receptionist in the Netherlands but when she arrived there she was taken to a 'sex club'. She was told she would work there as a prostitute. For three long years she worked from 2 pm till 4 in the morning. She stayed alone in a guarded room and allowed to go to the toilet only when escorted. She received no money for this work. It was as she says 'sexual slavery'.

Similar protest actions were also held in Japan and the Netherlands where the export of Filipinos for the sex trade has already been institutionalised.

Source: Gabriela

KILL JILL'S BILL

A LAST minute amendment to the English Local Government Bill, by Dame Jill Knight, has proposed to make illegal council funding which would 'promote homosexuality'.

This comes at a time when gays are being attacked by 'queer bashers' and an arson attack on the Capitol Gay HQ in London.

Dame Jill Knight (Tory toerag) would like to see the end of Lesbian and Gay switchboards, the end of advice on Aids, sex education, plays, books, films and also redefines 'the family'.

The family redefinition will affect lesbian custody. The Bill makes it illegal to teach 'the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. As such it means a judge could refer to the Bill and its definition of the family and deny lesbian custody.

Lesbian and gay pubs could be closed down as local councils grant licensing. Lesbian and gay pride marches could be stopped as local councils own the parks where they are held.

SPAIN

● On 6th November '87, the National Police raided and closed down the Caspe Clinic in Barcelona. Two women were arrested and held for 2 days on suspicion of giving abortions but were released without charge for lack of proof.

Abortions in Spain can still only be obtained in very few circumstances, e.g. proven rape and you have to go through long bureaucratic procedures.

Feminist groups picketed the police station while the 2 women were being held and the following week 500 women marched through the city and put up graffiti.

In the past the feminist movement in Barcelona have announced that they are performing their own secret abortion service. They have never yet been caught!

Source: Ekomedica.

● On 15th November there were militant demonstrations in Badalona, an industrial suburb of Barcelona, against the freeing on bail of a policeman, Manuel Arenas, who is accused of twice raping at gunpoint his neighbour, Isabel Perez, who lives in the same block.

POLAND

Demonstrations protesting against the effect of a 16% devaluation of the zloty commenced in Warsaw and Gdansk on 31st January. 50% rises in rent and transport charges accompany 40% rises in foodstuffs. Other rises in fuel and other charges are scheduled for April. A challenge has been thrown down to the opposition to mobilise Against austerity.

(B.B.C. TV News 1.2.88)

Miedzyrzec in Poland, Freedom & Peace (WiP) activists (an independent peace group) discovered that World War 2 bunkers were being used to store radioactive waste.

When the townspeople were told of the waste dump a demonstration was called with 4,000 people turning up (it only has a population of 13,000) every Sunday once a month since the summer of 1987.

In September '87 some people began a hunger strike to protest at fines imposed on WiP activists.

After these actions the Polish Government declared that no more radioactive waste would be dumped.

MARTIN FORAN

We recently received a letter from Martin Foran (C51796) (Parkhurst Prison, Newport, Isle of Wight) gaoled on trumped up charges [see previous Counter Information].

Martin is facing another major operation soon and would like to thank all Counter Information readers who sent him messages of support (from Australia, U.S.A., Canada, Spain, W:Germany and all over Britain).

Martin's mate in prison, Bruce Childs (F78958) is being hassled because of his support of Martin i.e. being moved to solitary, moved to a different prison (Wandsworth) etc. etc. We ask readers not to forget Bruce....he does a lot of good prison work!

Martin's Defence Fund to help fight for his release is:

Wilks Solicitors,
Martin Foran Defence Fund
Trust,
9 Garfield Road,
Ryde,
Isle of Wight, PO33 2PS.

In reply to this attack by the reactionary zealots of the Tory and Labore parties (known as Clause 27, now Clause 28!) the lesbian and gay community has set up a militant and mobile campaign.

At Harrods January sales a group of lesbians picketed the queues.

On January 9th 12,000 people took part in a 'Stop Clause 27' march. Thirteen people were arrested when the filth moved in to stop a section of the crowd 'visiting' Thatcher at Downing Street.

On January 30th 300 gathered in Edinburgh.

And it now it all looks set for a huge march on nutter James Anderton's patch in Manchester, on February 20th.

BANJAX THE POLL TAX

RESISTANCE to the Poll Tax is growing in Scotland. In Edinburgh locally based groups pledged to a mass collective refusal to pay the tax have formed or are forming in several areas, including Gorgie/Dalry, Leith, Newington/Southside, Stockbridge and Wester Hailes. Door to door leafleting, flyposting and local public meetings are underway. A packed meeting in Govan, Glasgow has called for non-registration and non-payment, as have meetings in Moorpark (Renfrew) and Ferguslie (Paisley).

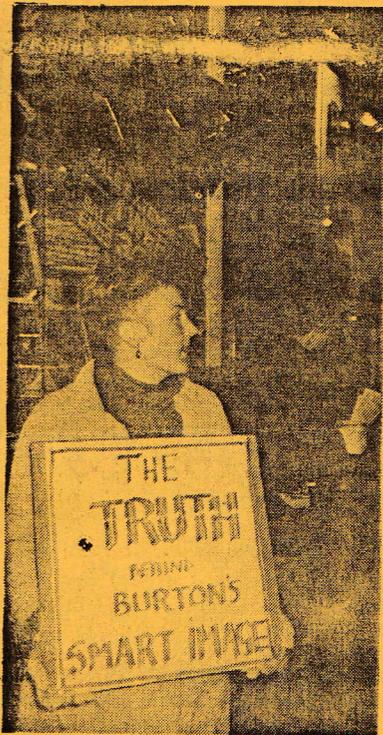
Hopefully the Poll Tax register snoopers will get a hot reception when they start knocking on doors in April!

Contact Community Resistance, pigeonhole CR, c/o 11 Forth St., Edinburgh or pigeonhole 30 c/o 340 West Princes St., Glasgow G4.

His home was picketed, and the local court was occupied by 15 women including Isabel herself, who locked themselves in and presented a 2,000 name petition demanding the cop's re-arrest.

He has not yet dared return to his flat.

Source: Ekomedica.



SACKED FOR BEING PREGNANT

Tricia Jennings was sacked by Burtons store in Edinburgh - for being pregnant. She started work in April 1987 and in September discovered she was pregnant. A few days later she was rushed to hospital with a threatened miscarriage. She informed Burtons who said all would be well as long as she told them when she would be returning to work. After six weeks she returned, to discover she'd been sacked. No reason was given and there were no complaints about her work. Furthermore, on the day she was sacked, Burtons were advertising for more staff.

Such sackings of women are widespread and must be stopped. The Tricia Jennings Defence Committee demands:

- Tricia's immediate reinstatement.
- Full reinstatement of her maternity rights and lost wages.
- An end to sex discrimination.

PICKET BURTONS, PRINCES ST - EVERY THURSDAY 5 - 7 PM. Picket Burtons everywhere!

CONTACT: The Tricia Jennings Defence Committee, c/o C.R.O., 43 Broughton St., Edinburgh. Tel: 031 557 3366

WORKING ON A CHAIN GANG

A NEW slave labour scheme is to pay unemployed adults their benefit plus £10 - for full-time work.

Starting in September, the scheme replaces the existing Community Programme and new Job Training Scheme. The government claims participation will be voluntary, but the new Employment Bill threatens possible benefit cuts for those refusing places.

A White Paper on this scheme will be published in February. How can we stop this latest step towards compulsory work for dole?

By threatening strike action workers can keep the scheme out of their workplaces. Claimants and workers can pressure local authorities and voluntary organisations to boycott the new scheme. Lothian Claimants Union are approaching all their local Councils.

HARINGEY

Libraries, a play centre, a school classroom and a swimming pool were all occupied during January against Haringey Council's cut backs.

On 5th January workers and users took over four libraries to oppose their closure. Now the Labour Council have withdrawn the closure plans. But, they are still trying to reduce opening hours. An overnight public swim in was held at the occupied swimming pool. The Council have since agreed to keep the pool open. Making waves works.....

ROUGH WATERS

6th Feb: The vast majority of British ferry crews were on strike in defiance of the law, the ferry bosses and Union leaders.

The seafarers struck in solidarity with 161 workers sacked by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. for striking against cuts in staff leave and wages.

P. & O. and Sealink took the National Union of Seamen to court. The legal system backed the bosses, naturally. The Union were ordered to end the strike as "unlawful secondary action".

"Back to work" said N.U.S. leader McCluskie, putting Union funds before workers' interest. But to date most crews have stayed out, contributing to a new "winter of discontent".

PICKETING BURTONS, PRINCES ST EDINBURGH. CUTBACK? FIGHTBACK!

DECENT HOMES FOR ALL was the watchword of a week of action in London from 22-29th January.

Protestors picketed estate agents in Stoke Newington, Brixton, Straatham and Tottenham. 20 estate agents in Stoke Newington were attacked. Amidst homelessness and sub-standard housing, estate agents make millions selling houses to rich yuppies.

On 27th January, forty squatters resisted an eviction in Brixton. Paint and flour bombs splattered the bailiffs. Police ensured the eviction took place, but the squatters escaped arrest.

Two days later demonstrators occupied the office of Lambeth Council leader Linda Bellos for 45 minutes.

Hackney Housing Action held useful meetings with the shop stewards convenors of Hackney Council Direct Labour Organisation. The aim? To develop workers - squatters - tenants solidarity against the Council's cut backs and mass evictions of squatters.

Hackney Council are planning mass evictions for late February. The squatters will resist. And, Hackney Housing Action are calling for actions countrywide in solidarity with the squatters. Decent Homes For All!

Contact: Hackney Housing Action, c/o 61 Leswin Rd., London, N.16.

TORCH OF LIBERTY

Tottenham Magistrates Court in north London was the target of an arson attack on Christmas night. There was extensive damage. The clerk of the court said: "Anyone could have done it, everyone's got a grievance against the court".

Following the countrywide Day of Action against Slavery on December 14th, claimants groups are stepping up the action. April 11th signals the start of a Week of Action against the new adult training scheme, the compulsory Youth Training Scheme and the Social Fund cuts.

Contact: Lothian Claimants Union 031-557 0718. B.C.U. c/o 31 Manor Row, Bradford. Tottenham C.U. 01-801 5629.

SCHOOLS OUT

SCHOOL pupils are resisting the introduction of the compulsory Youth Training Scheme. On 11th February the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign called a school students strike against the government plan to deny benefits, from 1st April, to young people refusing conscription onto the Youth Training Scheme (YTS).

In Edinburgh some school students produced their own leaflet urging strike action. They denounce YTS: "Its purpose is to train you to work for next to nothing." And they condemn the school system: "School is where we

DOLE QUIZ

A NEW, bigger, nastier Availability for Work Test was introduced countrywide on February 1st. If new unemployed claimants give the 'wrong' answer to any of the 17 questions their benefit can be suspended.

But Lothian Claimants Union and local Benefit Office workers hit back. Hundreds of leaflets were distributed to claimants, detailing the 'correct' answers to the questionnaire.

And a joint Claimants Union - CPSA Union branch leaflet urged the Benefit Office workers to oppose the new form, and help claimants fill in the form.

• Leaflets from: Claimants Union c/o EUWC, 2 Cranston St., Edinburgh.

learn authority and punishment. Where they train us to be obedient and submissive workers..."

"Don't wait for a political faction...anytime we want a strike we can organise one ourselves."

Contact Community Resistance, pigeonhole CR, c/o 11 Forth St., Edinburgh.

The Counter Information collective invites people to - send us articles and information - take bundles of the news-sheet to distribute - make a much needed donation towards our printing and postage costs - write for info on our Readers Meetings and the CI "Supplement" - contact us if they'd like to join the CI collective. We wish to co-operate with all who share our aims.

[Mail only to]: P/H C. Info., 11 Forth St., Edinburgh EH1.