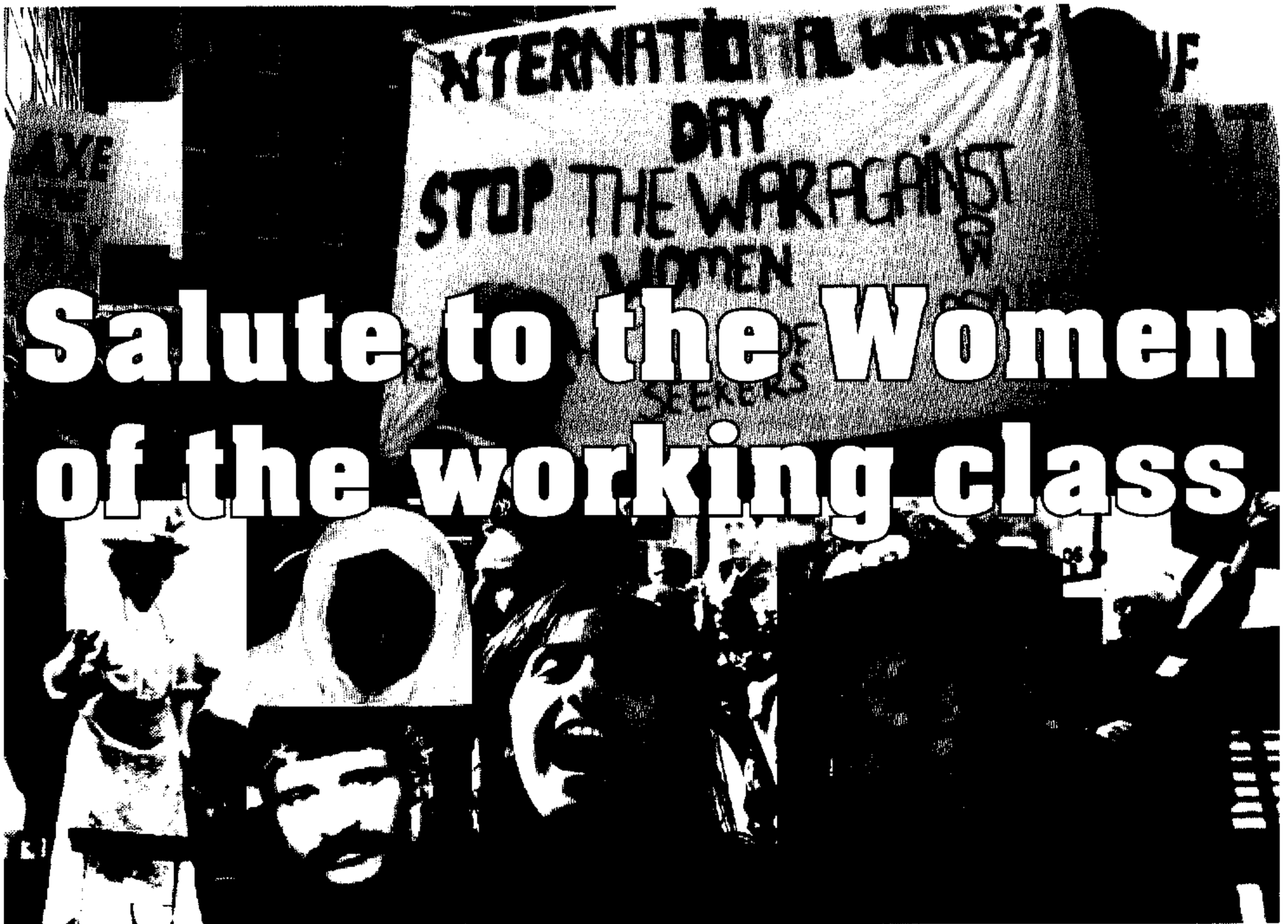


# SocialistVoice<sup>★</sup>

Nº 10 MARCH SPECIAL JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE, BRITISH SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS LEAGUE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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## Salute to the Women of the working class

This issue celebrates women's participation in the class struggle and the fight to end the oppression and abuse of women and children. We salute and support the millions of women who daily fight to bring dignity and care to their communities against a state that seeks to ignore their role and increase their burden.

Capitalism is determined to divide the working class and the oppression of women is an integral part of the system to maintain control. Reports over recent months reveal that the institutions of the state are riddled with sexism and male-chauvinist ideology and practices: in Parliament, the media, the catholic church, the police and the justice system.

It is from the tolerance or encouragement of sexism that violence and the abuse of women and children gains a hold in a world where over 50 per cent of its population is subjugated and violently

oppressed. The fight for women's rights is an integral part of the struggle of the working class against oppression and for socialism. Other oppressions such as racism and homophobia are also central to capitalism and women face double or triple oppression.

Cameron's government is driving the working class back into pre-welfare state and pre-NHS conditions. The Labour leadership and Labour councillors are betraying the working class at every step because they only understand compliance with the government's wishes, while at the same time openly acknowledging that "cuts kill people". But none are prepared to stand up and fight, pathetically asking, "What else can we do?"

What else can they do? They can stand on the side of the working class along with the women and the men who are

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# Rosa Luxemburg

## The Eagle of the revolution

Rosa Luxemburg was a Marxist theorist and revolutionary socialist of Polish descent who became a naturalized German citizen. An activist in Germany and Poland and the author of numerous classic works. Socialist Voice will publish further material on Rosa in the future.

The complete works of Rosa Luxemburg publishing project was started in March 2011 by Verso ([www.versobooks.com](http://www.versobooks.com)) with the publication of 'The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg'. Volume one (of 14 volumes) will be published in June this year.

### ROSA LUXEMBURG: RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

"... It is not a matter of this or that secondary question of tactics, but of the capacity for action of the proletariat, the strength to act, the will to power of socialism as such. In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world; they are still the only ones up to now who can cry with Hutten: 'I have dared!'"\*

"This is the essential and enduring in Bolshevik policy. In this sense theirs is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat with the conquest of power and the practical placing of the problem of the realization of socialism, and of having advanced mightily the settlement of the score between capital and labor

in the entire world. In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to 'Bolshevism.'"

### LENIN ON LUXEMBURG

"Eagles may at times fly lower than hens, but hens can never rise to the height of eagles." Rosa Luxemburg was mistaken on the question of the independence of Poland; she was mistaken in 1903 in her appraisal of Menshevism; she was mistaken on the theory of the accumulation of capital; she was mistaken in July 1914, when, together with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others, she advocated unity between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; she was mistaken in what she wrote in prison in 1918 (she corrected most of these mistakes at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 after she was released). But in spite of her mistakes she was—and remains for us—an eagle. And not only will Communists all over the world cherish her memory, but her biography and her complete works (the publication of which the German Communists are inordinately delaying, which can only be partly excused by the tremendous losses they are suffering in their severe struggle) will serve as useful manuals for training many generations of Communists all over the world."

### TROTSKY ON LUXEMBURG

Rosa's theory of spontaneity was a wholesome weapon against the ossified apparatus of reformism. By the fact that it was often directed against Lenin's work of building up a revolutionary apparatus, it revealed – to be sure, only in embryo – its reactionary features. With Rosa herself this occurred only episodically. She was much too realistic in the revolutionary sense to develop the elements of the theory of spontaneity into a consummate metaphysics. In practice, she herself, as has already been said, undermined this theory at every step. After the revolution of November 1918, she began the ardent labor of assembling the proletarian vanguard. Despite her theoretically very weak manuscript of the Soviet Revolution, written in prison but never published by her, Rosa's subsequent work allows the sure conclusion that, day by day, she was moving closer to Lenin's theoretically clearly-delineated conception concerning conscious leadership and spontaneity. (It must surely have been this circumstance that prevented her from making public her manuscript against Bolshevik policy which was later was so shamefully abused.)

\* Hutten advocated breaking Germany's ties with the papacy. His 1520 book *Arouser of the German Nation*, opens with his motto "Ich hab's gewagt" (I have dared to do it).

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EDITORS  
Margaret McAdam and Martin Ralph

LAYOUT  
João Simões and Martin Ralph

(continued from the front page)

## International Women's Day

taking to the streets instead of being a slave to the dictates of a Parliament that does not care for the poor, the sick, the vulnerable, but only for the richest.

### Socialism or Barbarism

One of the first rank of women we salute is Rosa Luxemburg, who devoted her life to the revolutionary international movement and the revolutionary wing of the second international. She was murdered in 1918 after the Social Democratic leader Friedrich Ebert ordered the armed state force, the Freikorps, to destroy the left-wing revolution that was threatening capitalist rule.

Rosa said, "Bourgeois class domination is undoubtedly an historical necessity, but, so too, the rising of the working class against it. Capital is an historical necessity, but, so too, its grave digger, the socialist proletariat."

She said on the eve of the First World War that the future for humanity was either socialism or barbarism. Since then 99 years have passed, 99 years of the bloodiest period in the history of humanity.

Today the working class faces the same issues of inhumanity, brutality and degradation, and women are in the front line fighting alongside men and youth. From the bedroom tax revolt to the Syrian revolution working class women are rising.

There are many inspiring examples of women who have played a leading role in

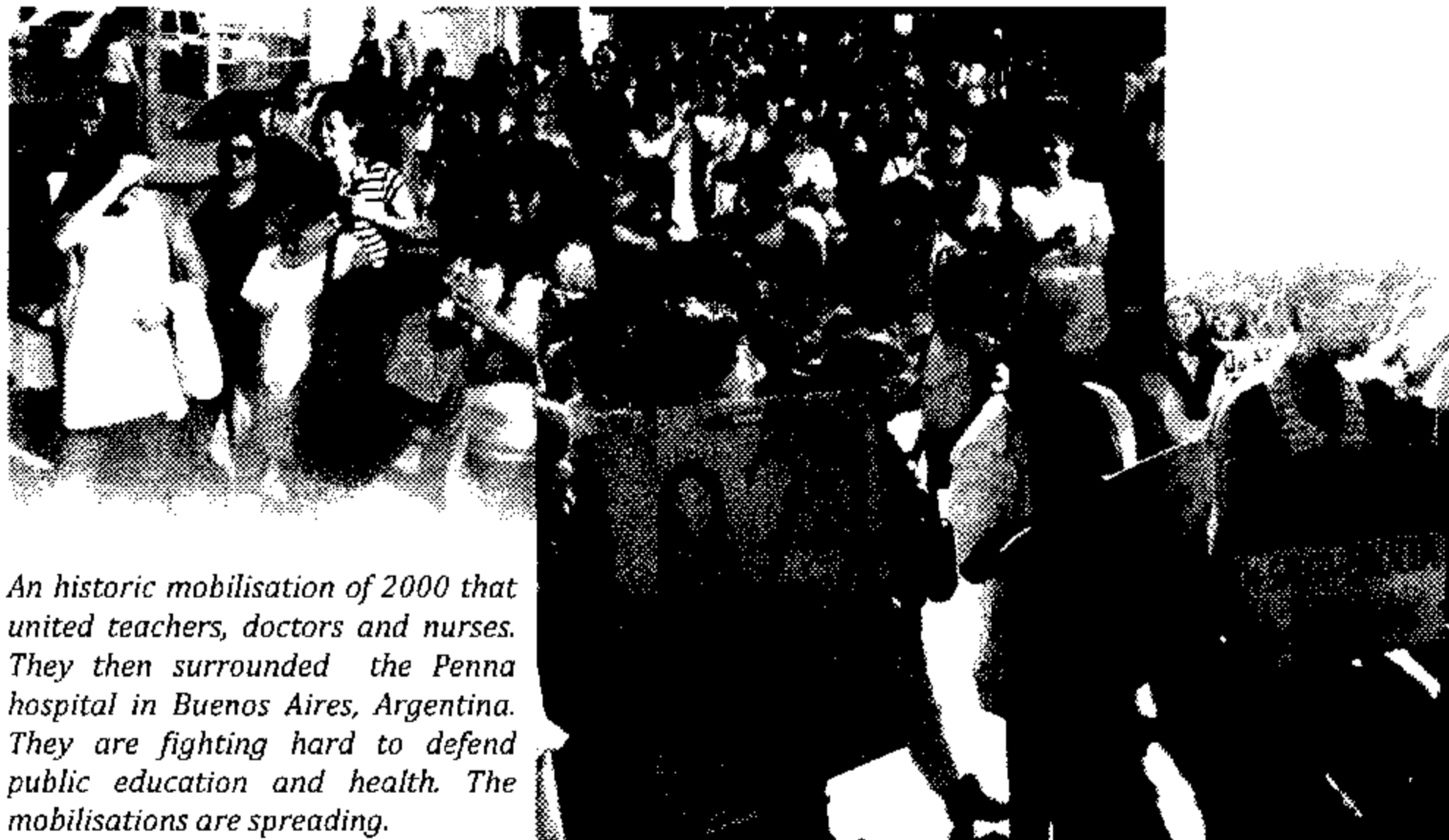
the struggle against disgusting capitalist policies: the women of the waterfront were an integral part of the struggle of the Liverpool dock workers in 1995 to 1998; the Tameside care workers fought for one and a half years from 1998 and were led by a committee of six women; the Grunwick textile workers' strike from 1976 to 1978 in London; the women Ford sewing machinists' strike in 1968 in Dagenham who fought for equal recognition and pay; the miners' wives fought in the strike of 1984 to 1985.

The miners' wives built new networks and formed support groups in every mining village, forging a national group, Women Against Pit Closures. On 11 August 1984, 23,000 working class women marched through London against Thatcher's attacks and pit closure programme.

One of the great songs of the miners' strike was "we are the women of the working class". It built on a long tradition, including "Which Side are You On?", written by Florence Reece in 1931 during a bitter miners' strike in the USA.

The only way to end the increasing oppression and abuse of women is to join the struggles of the working class and build a revolutionary party. The International Socialist League is part of a living international, the International Workers League, which has many revolutionary women fighters and leaders. If you want to build a party to put an end to capitalism, join us.

## Argentina: Workers, men and women, join struggle for public health and education



An historic mobilisation of 2000 that united teachers, doctors and nurses. They then surrounded the Penna hospital in Buenos Aires, Argentina. They are fighting hard to defend public education and health. The mobilisations are spreading.

The demands seen here are: for pensions to be 82 per cent of final salary, education is a social right and not a market, and no to cuts in wages and education

## Axe the tax Demo 30 March Glasgow London



Speech by John Ritchie, member of Stand Up In Bootle, Merseyside at the 28 February march and rally in Bootle

It is time to end the unjust, unethical, unfair, evil demonisation, persecution and penalisation of the working classes, employed and unemployed, sick, disabled, poor and those on benefits and low incomes!

Say no to the bedroom tax, no to more discrimination against those in social housing and no to welfare cuts and council related cuts in benefits! No more lies, no more made up statistics and being a victim of this the cruel blame game!!

The banks, Cameron's millionaires club and tax dodgers caused all this! So tax the rich, not those that can ill afford it!

What is wrong with us? Are we truly the insignificant mice David Cameron and his cronies believe us to be?

Enough is enough!!

Let's get this vermin of a government out, and once out try them and ATOS for their heinous crimes against humanity. They have blood on their hands!

Haul in the unpaid taxes, bring the banks to justice.

'Stand up in Bootle' and for everybody concerned! Nobody, and I mean nobody, will stand up for us!

Use your voice and make yourself heard!!

Before it's too late!!

We will fight and push the enemy right to parliament's door if necessary!

No matter how long it takes!

# They slash we burn

Martin Ralph, *International Socialist League*, interviewed Aimi Molloy, *Women's Representative, Fire Brigades Union, Liverpool*

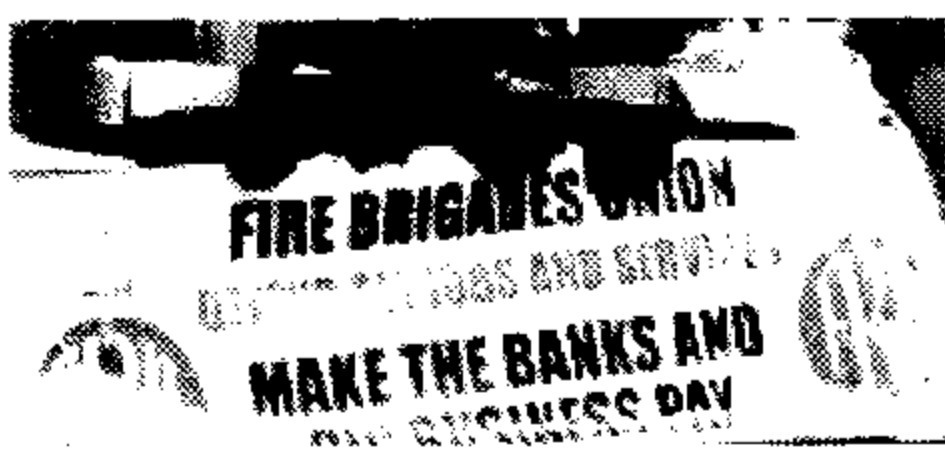


**SV: What are the main cut issues facing the fire services at the moment?**

Cuts have already been made over the last few years and we all know further cuts can only lead to a worse service.

The main issues the fire service faces in the UK because of cuts are slower response times to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions, floods and persons trapped. Another major impact of the cuts will be the reduction in the amount of preventative work we are able to carry out.

Fewer fire fighters and fewer appliances could put a significant strain on our health and safety at incidents while waiting for other appliances to respond. With a crew of four in attendance at a house fire you are limited to what you can do.



**SV: How can the FBI fight these cuts?**

We have fought and will continue fighting the cuts, locally and nationally. In Merseyside, we are now in the position of facing 10 million pounds worth of cuts over the next two years, which will see the loss of 90 firefighter posts and 50 support staff posts. Once we know the outcome of the Fire Authority budget meeting on 26 February, the FBU will then have a consultation period and then we will respond to their proposals. Nationally, anger is growing and we know we are not alone in this fight as all our brothers and sisters around the country are being affected by the cuts.

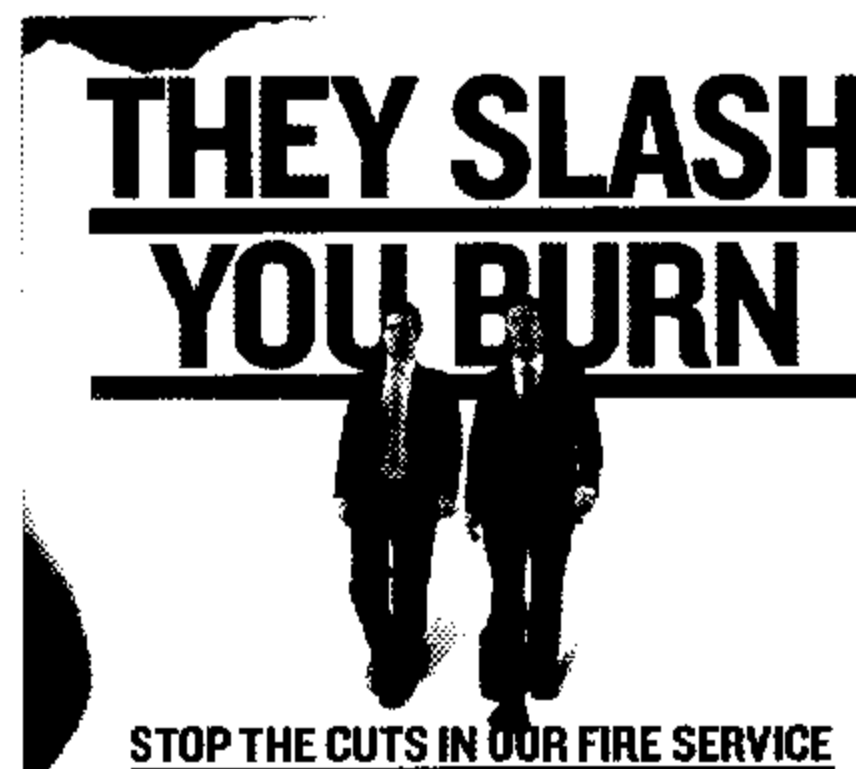
**SV: What plans do the government have for privatising the fire service?**

I'd heard in December last year that they had plans to sell off the Fire Service College to the private company Capita.

The first I knew of the government's plans to privatise the 46 fire services was the article in the Mirror on 8 February. I was horrified at the thought of the fire service being run for profit – it should always be there to protect the people of our community in emergencies and never ever be about making money for others.

**SV: Do you think the link with the fire service, as a public service, with the communities is important?**

I think the fire service should always remain a public service. The cost to the public is around £50 per person a year, as stated in our FBU campaign. A petition was set up on the online petition 38 degrees against privatising the fire service the day after the Mirror article was released. It gained over 10,000 signatures within a day and I think that shows the level of support for it to stay a public service.



On Saturday 23 February, three campaigners against the cuts positioned themselves outside the Old Swan library in Liverpool where they had have been collecting signatures for an anti-cuts petition over a number of weeks.

Their ANTI-CUTS PETITION banner was hanging on the railings outside the library. Sue Ferguson, one of the campaigners, had not noticed anybody else around her until she heard a voice. It turned out to be the voice of councillor Peter Brennan.

Sue Ferguson wrote the following on the events that followed.

"I think" he said "We know what you're doing" and then something about being offended. His manner at this point was very aggressive and this was 9.45 in the morning.

He was saying well what do you want us to do go back to the 80s and Derek Hatton – he definitely said that. I tried to "discuss" with him but his manner he was very hyped up and there was a lot of shouting

At the same time there were two Labour councillors for the Old Swan ward just standing there. Councillor Brennan continued along the lines of what do you want us to do? He said that I had asked a question at the Mayor Select Committee and been given the answer, that is, that they had to set a "balanced budget".

The discussion at that time was between Councillor Brennan and myself. I agreed that I had asked the question, but that it had not been answered, despite the fact that three people had given responses – the Chair, Mayor Anderson and the Chief Executive. Councillor Brennan then said, "Yes, you were given an answer", and I replied that no I wasn't.

...councillors Calvert and Miller [were] just standing there... [councillor Brennan had his] hands on hips, leaning down to face me, because I am in a wheelchair, and said, "Go on then ask your question!"

...I was there to collect signatures on a petition and that is what I was then going to do. I then turned my wheelchair so that I had my back to him and began giving out leaflets.

## London's Turkish and Kurdish communities celebrate International Women's Day

London's Turkish and Kurdish communities celebrate International Women's Day

"Violence towards women has increased all over the world. Wars, austerity measures and the economic problems that they bring, increase the amount of violence day by day.

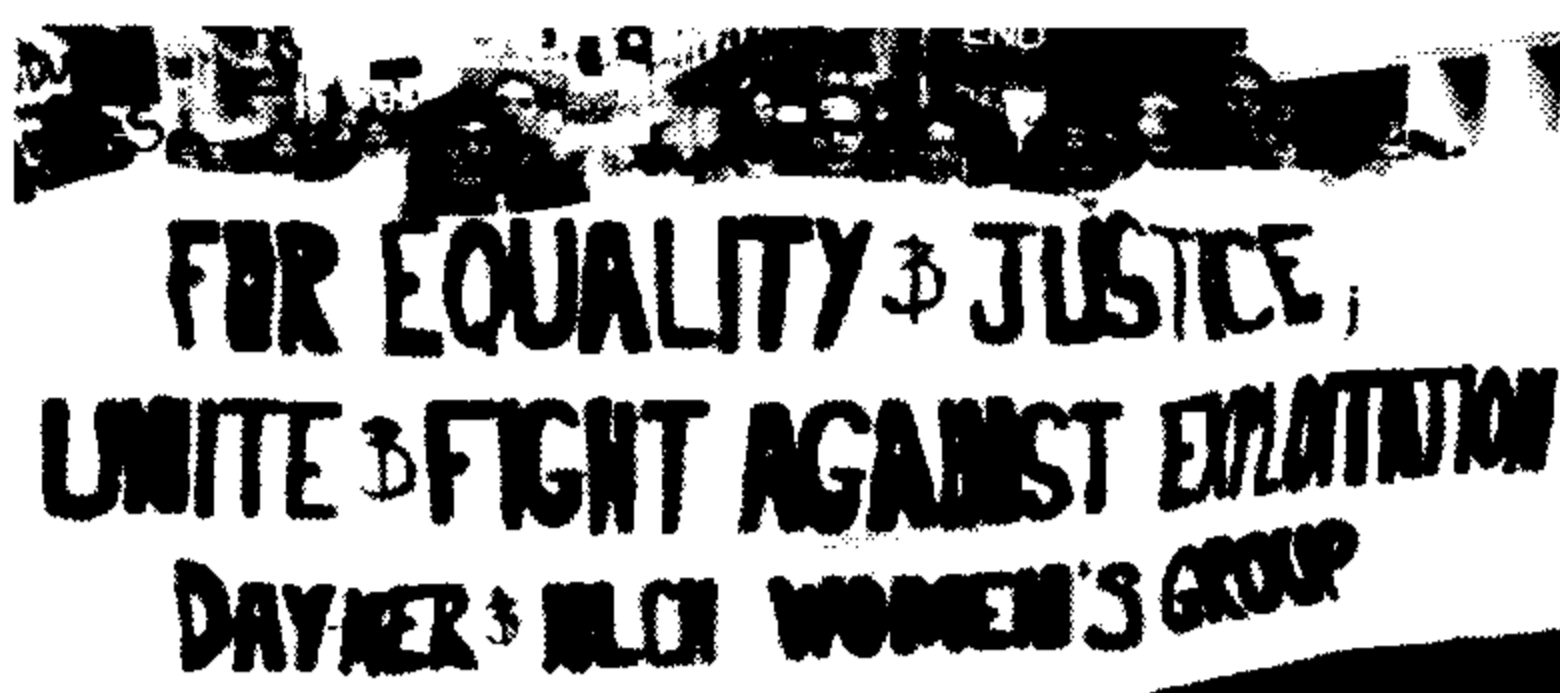
We call upon all working class women to stand up in the struggle of their problems, indigenous and immigrant women to come together and to join our march and festival." Day Mer Women's Commission.

Turkish and Kurdish women with their communities are fighting for the rights

of women and fighting against the cuts in benefits, services and jobs now being imposed by the government and Labour councils.

They are also part of Haringey health activists and doctors fighting the privatisation of the NHS. Recently, Haringey Clinical Commissioning Group

(CCG) has set out rules that can stop private companies taking over health services in Haringey. It is one of the leading areas fighting government plans to privatise the NHS.



## Berfo Ana: The Mother who never gave up

Canan Sagar member of the International Socialist League

Berfo Ana, the Turkish mother who campaigned for decades to uncover the truth about her son's disappearance, has died at the age of 105. She never locked her door for thirty-three years so that when Cemil came back he could walk straight in the house.

It is said that under the military junta hundreds of thousands of people were tortured, many were killed and thousands disappeared.

### Dictatorship killed her son

A day after the military coup on 12 September 1980, her son, Cemil Kirbayır, was arrested. On 8 October, his brother Mikail Kirbayır tried to visit him. However, he was told that Cemil had escaped.

Eyewitnesses said that he had been subjected to extreme torture. The Kirbayır family requested information from the Justice Minister, the Home Office and the President over many years. They always received the same answer, "Cemil was missing, he had escaped".

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Turkish parliament) Human Rights Commission investigation concluded that Cemil was "tortured and killed in custody and his corpse was removed by the investigating officers".

During a meeting with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2011, Berfo Ana asked for the remains of her son so that she could bury him. Her wish was for

him to be buried in a grave so that she could visit him.

General Kenan Evren, the leader of the military junta, and others went trial on 10 January 2012 for their role in state terror during September 1980. However, he did not attend the first trial and gave ill health as an excuse for not attending.



Berfo Ana said at the trial, "Kenan Evren, did you have no shame when killing my child? You demolished my house; your house should be demolished. Don't hide, come here!" She said to the judge, "Why didn't you bring that murderer here?" She attended all the hearings and court cases, whether in good health or in a wheelchair. One of her most unforgettable speeches proclaimed to Kenan Evren, "I am not going to die until I find the bones of my son".

### Saturday Mothers

On Saturday 27 May 1995, the mothers of the disappeared children started to meet in Galatasaray Square, Istanbul. The main aim of the Saturday Mothers and their supporters was to raise awareness of the pain and sorrow over the lost relatives and to expose the role of the

Turkish State in the disappearances.

They were influenced by the Argentinean families whose children were killed or "disappeared" by the armed forces of the ruling junta. These families met every week at the Plaza De Mayo square to protest; their number reached thousands.

From 15 August 1998 until 13 March 1999 many protestors were attacked by Turkish police who used gas bombs and detained. The Saturday Mothers had to suspend their protest due to these attacks, but on 31 January 2009 they started again.

Journalists, writers, artists and MPs who were sympathetic towards the mothers' campaign were invited to the meetings. The mothers and their supporters brought flowers and left them as a symbol.

### Never forget

Mikail Kirbayır said that his mother was a representative of justice and died unable to put carnations on her son's grave. In her last days she said, "Kenan Evren, give me my son's bones. Don't bury me without finding my son's bones".

A park in Ankara, capital of Turkey, will be named after Berfo Ana. The foundation stone will be laid on 9 March just after World Working Women's Day and is aimed for completion by the end of the year.



# The Wave of Protests

*We are publishing an interview by the PSTU (Brazil) with Adhiraj Bose. He is one of the activists of the New Wave, an Indian group that maintains fraternal relations with the Workers International League.*

**What is the situation regarding sexual violence in India?**

Adhiraj: Indian women are perhaps among the most oppressed in the world. Sexual violence forms a major part of the prevalent modes of oppression of women, which include female foeticide (killing a female before birth), dowry deaths, domestic violence, and constant harassment.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau there are above 24,000 rapes each year. Last year around 36,000 cases of molestation were reported. Dowry deaths number between 7,000 and 8,000 annually and in 2010 around 8,319 dowry deaths occurred. In the dowry system the bride's family must pay a kind of "protection money" for "services rendered" by the groom's family in "taking care of the bride". The groom's family does not pay.

Although dowry was abolished in law in 1961, this has not succeeded in liberating women from this curse, as the family structure remains intact. The extent of the violence can be gauged by the fact that there are 100 million women missing in India.

**oppression of women takes different forms, apart from violence, which often are combined with capitalist exploitation. Is this the case in India?**

Adhiraj: What I said above constitutes the overt and violent aspect of gender discrimination in India. The covert and regular violence that women have to endure includes discrimination at the workplace, with lower wages and under-employment rife among women in jobs like construction work, maid service and health centre work.

Until 2005 women did not have equal property rights in a divorce. Even today, seven years after the Hindu Divorce Act was amended, women still don't enjoy a joint right over their husband's property. In many cases it has been found that their claim to property has been not been accepted by their in-laws, leading to mental torture, harassment and forced suicides.

The condition of women minorities is just as bad, with archaic provisions for divorce creating conditions for their misuse. One particularly infamous provision of the Muslim marriage act

recognises the "triple talak" whereby the husband can legally terminate a marriage by saying, "I divorce you" three times.

The condition of women in the rural areas is generally worse than in the urban areas. Far from resolving the social tensions at the roots, Indian capitalism has succeeded only in exacerbating them.

**Last December, a twenty-three-year-old physiotherapist was raped by six men on a bus in Delhi. She later died of her injuries, prompting a wave of protests all over India. In December, the protests took place almost daily throughout the country and have been regarded as a "turning point" in the fight against sexual violence in India. Why did this happen?**

Adhiraj: The protests in Delhi spiralled into an aggressive revolt rather spontaneously. Before this, there were mass mobilisations around single incidents of rape; notable instances have been during the Khairlanji killings[1] and the case of Jessica Lall[2].

There is an ongoing movement against the Armed Force (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)[3], which has worked to protect military personnel from rape and sexual criminal charges in northeast India. Irom Sharmila[4] is demanding the repeal of AFSPA and is now on a continuous hunger strike. AFSPA however remains in force, empowering the armed forces with wide powers of search and seizure in the northeast which give them unfettered access to brutalise the population of the northeast.

In Delhi, the initially peaceful protests were met by police violence, which spurred on more intense agitation and later assumed the form of open revolt. Once the situation became tense in Delhi, the rest of the nation woke up and protests evolved in every major city.

**What are the prospects for the protests to continue?**

Adhiraj: The wave continues even though it has ebbed considerably since the start of the protests. This is the second time in a year that such a large-scale spontaneous eruption has happened, the first being the anti-corruption protests, which were again spurred on by police violence.

India is presently in a critical pre-revolutionary stage where such

uprisings, revolts and mobilisations will emerge. This trend we have traced back to 2009 when clear signs of working class militancy were emerging in the sugar workers' strike, the car workers' strike in Maharashtra, and the peasant uprisings across eastern and central India. The world situation was tense and has become tenser.

With this particular incident of rape, the tolerance of the masses had already reached its threshold, and all the pent up anger was unleashed against the government and the system it espouses. Some of the slogans, in Delhi at least, assumed a very general character; "Down with capitalism" was a popular slogan. That is reflective of the deep character of this movement and the implications are far reaching.



**Just a day before the death on the 26 December another girl died, in the district of Patiala. It's said that she committed suicide after stating that she was raped on 13 November in a Hindu Festival in Diwali. According to the girl's family, when they tried to register the crime in the police station they were mocked, the girl was harassed and nothing was done. Is this the typical treatment given by the police for this kind of cases?**

Adhiraj: In this context, it's important to gauge the role of the police. The police showed tremendous insensitivity and brutality in suppressing the protests in Delhi. In Pune the police were reluctant to allow even limited peaceful marches in the city, although there was no resort to violence.

The immediate incidents aside, the police have performed most ignominiously in dealing with sexual crimes in India and are notorious for corrupt practices, not limited of course to the treatment of sexual crimes. A combination of chauvinism and apathy has made police enforcement in this sphere of policing a total waste of time.

# against Rape in India

Often policemen are reluctant to record FIRs relating to rape, using the false categorisation of "genuine case" versus "false case".

The police force is by and large a male-dominated force with minimal participation of women.

To this our proposal is twofold : 1) policemen who have shown insensitivity towards women during the policing in Delhi must be removed and 2) in the long run we demand more representation of women in the police force and the creation of specialised cells in police stations for dealing with sexual violence and LGBT issues. Part of this campaign would be to make the existing cells more functional.

## What is The New Wave's position on the demand for capital punishment for rapists?

Adhiraj: The sorry state of affairs regarding the conviction of rapists has led to a very frustrated expression of anger which has presently assumed the form of demanding the death penalty.

While we sympathise with the mass anger being expressed, we do not support any demand for the imposition of the death penalty. We do not stand in principle for giving the bourgeoisie a weapon of legalised murder. India already has provision for the death penalty. The media in India are focusing on the demand for the death penalty and "stricter punishment" for rapists.

The focus on the death penalty is aimed at leading the mobilisations into a dead end by painting the demonstrators as barbaric.

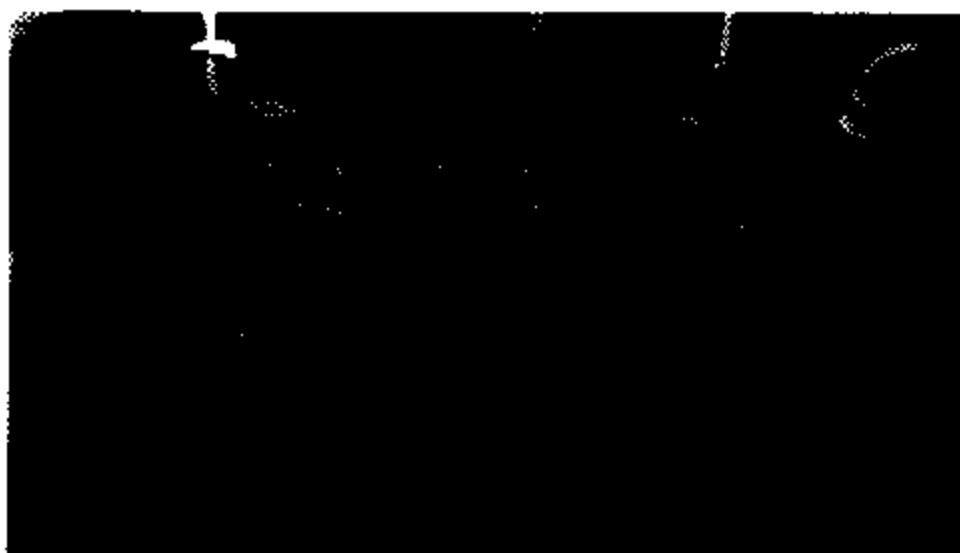
## How is the LGBT movement in your country and how is it acting in relation to the present situation?

Adhiraj: It is true that our leaflet focuses on only one angle of sexual violence, but that is only because we were supporting a particular demonstration.

However, our programmatic position on violence and gender-based discrimination takes into account the LGBT issue as well. The movement is presently dominated by an elite bourgeois leadership without the participation of the poor. However, that is changing with the movement becoming wider and increasingly more acceptable in the larger spectrum of social movements.

Presently the movement for LGBT

rights is based on the abolition of section 377 which outlaws homosexual sexual practices under the pretext of "Unnatural sex". An important judgement was passed in the Delhi High Court which recognised that this section was outdated and needed to be struck down. However, the law has yet to be amended, and the case is pending in the Supreme Court. In relation to the present situation, the LGBT community broadly sympathises with those who are raped and sympathises with the protests at large.



**Due to the wave of protests, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was forced to charge the men who were involved in the rape. Bikram Singh, leader of the Congress Party in the state of Assam, was arrested and accused of attacking a girl last December. It seems that these decisions are unprecedented since, as you say in the pamphlet, there are 369 politicians involved in sexual harassment cases or rape charges. What is likely to happen?**

Adhiraj: The "unprecedented" action of the Indian government was in the face of overwhelming protests. Something had to be done to douse the people's anger. The rapists were brought to trial so quickly because mass pressure which forced the normally passive government to act.

This is not the first instance of mass pressure forcing the state to act. Earlier, in the case of Jessica Lall, mass pressure played a pivotal role in influencing judicial opinion to punish Manu Sharma, who was the accused. In the Khairlanji protest mass pressure had an influence over judicial processes where a death sentence was passed. In this case the final verdict was passed two years after the actual incident, a remarkable pace considering that cases can linger in court for well over a decade.

Eventually, the high court overturned the death sentence of the lower court and commuted the death sentence to a 25-year imprisonment. Given this example and others like it, I remain

somewhat pessimistic about the process against rapists. I would be surprised, however, if a stern order is not passed by the judiciary in this matter.

## What are the proposals of New Wave to continue the demonstrations?

Adhiraj: Even if this individual case is dealt with strictly the fundamental question of law reforms would remain unanswered. With a good number of politicians and legislators themselves being accused of rape and sexual charges I would expect some sort of opposition from them in parliament. What form this opposition will take remains to be seen; at this point, the bourgeoisie would most likely try to hide and concede to mass pressure rather than reveal their true character. The case of the Assamese Congress party leader is significant in this case - a recent news report showed villagers beating him in public!

A campaign which focuses on cleansing the political structure in the country of such sexist and brutal elements would constitute a very vital part of a larger campaign for gender equality and must unquestionably form a part of the whole struggle against patriarchy in India. For this we have demanded de-recognition of all politicians who have been charged with sexual crimes, be they Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly or politicians standing for election.

The New Wave group's present focus is to try to build such a campaign for de-recognition with organisations involved in the fight against gender discrimination. The idea is to suspend the position of the politician until the charge is proven, and strip him of all responsibilities pertaining to representation. If the charges are proven such people must then be banned permanently from political life.

1] The massacre of a "dalit", or untouchable" family in 2006 by members of a "superior" caste. The women were undressed and dragged through the streets before being violently murdered.

[2] A model murdered in 1999 during a party. Witnesses pointed to the son of a wealthy and influential Congress-nominated Member of Parliament. He was acquitted.

[3] A 1958 act that allows the Executive to declare a State of Siege and concede unlimited powers to Army members.

[4] A poet and Human Rights activist, also known as Mengoubi - "the just" - who has been on hunger strike for twelve years.

# International Women's Day 8 March statement

## Men and women working together against capitalism

Written by International Women's Secretariat - IWL

The civil war in Syria, the Tahrir Square demonstrations, strikes and marches in Europe and the angry uprising against violations in India show there are thousands and thousands of women workers breaking the boundaries of oppression, breaking the divorce between women and politics, and that women have their place in revolutions.



With and without a veil, Arab women are on the streets and are an active part of the revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East. In Europe it is no different. In the general strike on 14 November, in the struggles against evictions, in the radicalised miners strike of Asturias, in unemployed youth and student movements, women close ranks with men in the resistance against the austerity plans.

In India, the streets were filled by protests against violence towards women. A 23-year-old was the victim of a brutal crime when returning from a walk with a friend in New Delhi. She was attacked and raped in a bus while the vehicle was in motion. On 29 December, 13 days after the rape, the girl died in a hospital in Singapore.

The crime, which was not an isolated incident, was the straw that broke the camel's back of an unbearable situation. Seven of the ten fastest growing crimes in India have women as victims, and rape is top of the list. A 2010 study revealed that 80 per cent of women suffered verbal harassment in Delhi and one third of women were physically abused (The New York Times, 8 April 2011).

What was new this time, influenced by the overall situation, was that men and women took to the streets and took this social problem out of the "private sphere", something that reaches thousands of women worldwide. The demonstrations took on a political nature that questioned the government and the police's inadequate response.

In Latin America, the conservative church is facing pressure. Women in Uruguay won, as a result of their mobilisation, the decriminalisation of abortion. Despite its limitations, this is a breakthrough that should be emulated across the continent.

### On the front line of attacks

Contradicting strong ideological propaganda that machismo is a thing of the past, the data shows that the oppression of women continues. A United Nations report reveals that 70 per cent of the poor are women (Gender Trap: Women, Violence and Poverty, 2010).

In times of crisis the situation is even worse. According to the International Labour Organisation report, Global Employment Trends Among Women 2013, the global economic crisis means 13 million women are unemployed. In Europe, women are the preferred target of government attacks. They are mostly

in public service jobs (85 per cent are in health and education), which is among the most attacked by the austerity plans. Between 2011 and 2012, the European budget for education was cut by € 2,300 million.

The wage gap grew with the crisis. There are twice as many women than men receiving the minimum wage. In Portugal, the pay gap between men and women increased 4.4 per cent

from 2007 to 2010 (For the Inclusion of a Gender Perspective in Public Auditing and Public Debt. Study published in January 2013 by the Feminist Anti Austerity Campaign).

Double oppression of women is also shown by statistics. An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study in 2011 shows that women spend an average of four hours a day more than men on housework. It also reveals that it is women who suffer most from cuts in social rights and public services, as they are "responsible" for the care of house and family health.

Policies to support pregnancy, motherhood, and the right to abortion are being heavily attacked. This makes the social situation particularly acute because life is much more difficult for women, especially mothers. For single women with children the risk of poverty is 34 per cent while among single male parents it is virtually zero (For the Inclusion of a Gender Perspective in Public Auditing and Public Debt. Study published in January 2013 by the Feminist Anti Austerity Campaign).

There is also an ideological offensive by conservatives that says a solution to the crisis and unemployment is for women to return home.

The explanation for this is that capitalism needs to completely dismantle the social gains of the European working class to have the possibility of overcoming the economic crisis.

### Domestic and sexual violence

The consequences of this unequal and unfair system is not just economic for women. There is a deep moral degeneration of society, money is worth more than people, life is worth very little and women are becoming a commodity in the market.

It is in the context of a system that encourages women to be routinely seen as the property of men, that domestic violence and sex crimes, harassment, rape and human trafficking has reached alarming rates. According to the UN one billion women are battered or abused throughout their life.

Young women are the biggest victims of sexual crimes. Human trafficking is a barbaric form of violence through which young women are subjected to sexual slavery. For the bourgeoisie it is a lucrative business. According to an International Labour Organisation estimate, human trafficking makes 32 billion dollars annually.



**What is the way out?**

The bourgeoisie, conscious of the role of sexism in capitalist society, stimulates a reactionary ideology that divides the working class and encourages submission and subservience of women.

At the same time, some bourgeois sectors try to take over the leadership of women's struggles. Giving a new face to old reformist answers, organisations like the World March of Women promote the "theory of empowerment".

According to this theory, the arrival of women in power, following the example of Angela Merkel, Cristina Kirchner and Dilma Rousseff, is the way forward for the problems facing women. It is the old proposal of the "sisterhood of women", that is, women united in the fight against men can overcome patriarchy.

Meanwhile, women workers in these countries are still ruled by men and remain in poverty. And, more than that, these women heads of government lead the implementation of austerity plans.

Men and women of the working class united against capitalism and sexism

Every struggle of workers for the most basic right is important and must be continued since there is no final conquest under this system. At a time of international crisis the attack on basic rights is even more intense on the oppressed, including women. But not all women as there is a division between women, between those that are part of the attack and those being attacked.

Bourgeois women who assume senior positions in government, despite suffering oppression, are not in the same conditions as workers. They are free from exploitation and, on the contrary, help to ensure that workers continue to be oppressed and exploited.

The women who have participated actively in the ongoing demonstrations, in Europe, in the Middle East and North Africa are the workers.

Workers can unite temporarily with bourgeois women for some democratic issues, for example, the right to abortion. But these agreements quickly break down as soon they collide with the limits of the capital.

That is why the strategic unity for working women is with their own class, the only class that can defeat capitalism and promote the conditions for a socialist society, which in turn opens the conditions for the realisation of full equality.

Working class men who practice acts of machismo and defend that ideology, consciously or unconsciously, are defending the employers. When a worker ceases to be macho and takes an offensive against oppression, it undermines the aim of the employer to divide by super exploitation.

With each right robbed from women, capitalism advances in its abuse of the whole working class. Machismo favours only the bourgeoisie. Therefore, workers' organizations must take forward the demands of women, if they do not women will be at the mercy of the popular front alternatives that lead struggles to defeat.

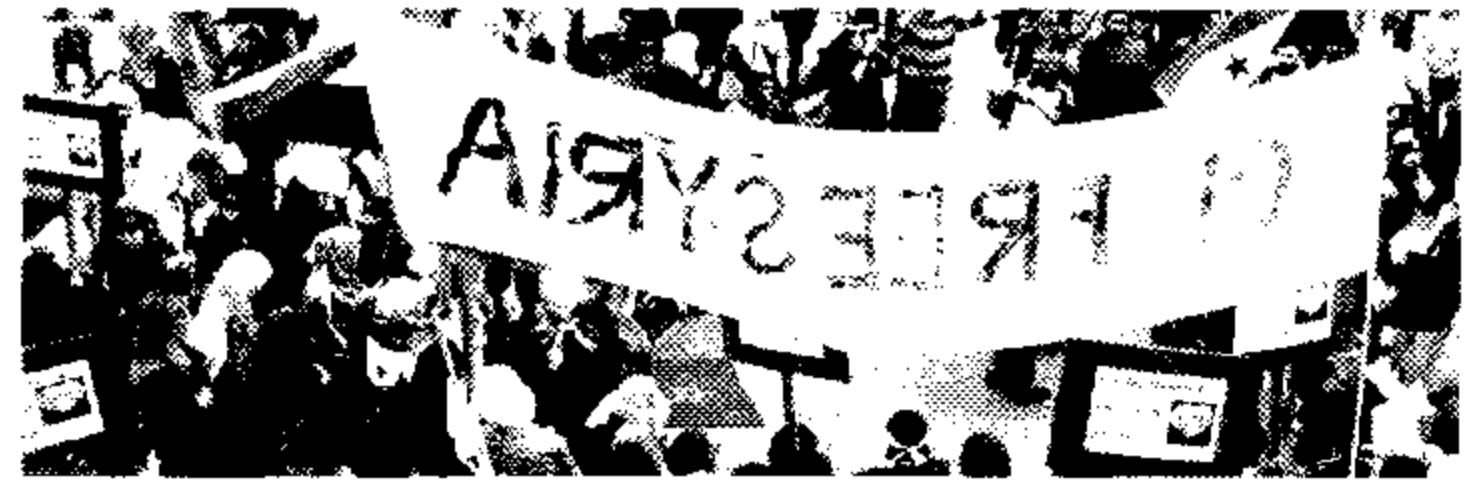
On 8 March, the IWL calls on all women workers to organise and fight alongside men in its class to defend their rights, and invites them to join and build the revolutionary party. That is a central weapon in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and to build socialism, the only way to end all forms of oppression and exploitation.

## Women in revolutionary Syria: Fighting for their rights

*Sara, Syrian revolutionary.*

*From Al Thawra, a Brazilian newsletter supporting the revolutions in the Arab world and Free Palestine.*

When the Syrian revolution erupted, everything changed. In March 2011, in the southern city of Daraa, people took to the streets after 14 children were arrested and tortured for writing on the walls of their schools the slogan of the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt: "The people want the downfall of the regime."



### Women join the revolution

Razan Zaitouneh, a human rights lawyer who formed what is right now called the Local Coordination Committees (LCC), archives regime violations against citizens and disseminates the most dependable information to the world. She is now in hiding in Syria, having been accused of being a foreign agent.

Some women have become iconic to revolutionaries, such as Muntaha Sultan al-Atrash, a human rights activist and grand-daughter of the Syrian hero Sultan Basha al-Atrash, a commander of the Syrian revolt against the French between 1925 and 1927. To her goes the credit of being one of the first to publicly proclaim that the regime had to be toppled.

Marwa Ghamyan, a young woman who helped organize one of the first protests in the city of Damascus, long before most of the city joined the revolution. It was symbolic precisely because Damascus was not at that time in the revolutionary camp. She was arrested and detained several times, and now lives in exile.

Thwaiba Kanafani, an engineer by training, left her family in Canada, and joined the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to help in tactical and strategic plans of strikes.

Lubna al Merhi, an Alawite, the religious group Assad belongs to, was active in the revolution from day one until an arrest warrant was issued in her name and she fled to Turkey, in an escape arranged by the FSA. After she appeared in a televised interview, her mother was arrested as a way of pressuring her to return to Syria.

Hanadi Zahlouta, poet and engineer, was arbitrarily detained and attacked by regime lawyers in court, both physically and verbally. Hanadi was charged with violating three articles from the Syrian penal code: establishing an organisation that aims to change the social and economic character entity of the state, weakening the national identity and awakening sectarian and ethnic tension, and spreading false news that weakened the soul of the nation. She was sentenced for fifteen years in jail, without a fair trial.

### The fight for a space

Traditionally, funeral processions are exclusively male. After the revolution, they often turn into anti-regime demonstrations where women are present. Women are, exercising a right that is being destroyed by military force, and in resisting they are developing the seeds of a new social order.

# Don't Take Your Love to Town

*A play about the life of an Aboriginal woman Ruby Langford Ginibi at the Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, Australia. From the book of the same title by Ruby. Adapted by Eamon Flack and Leah Purcell, Actor/director Leah Purcell*  
*Review by Derek Mortimer*

The publication in 1988 of *Don't Take Your Love to Town* by Ruby Langford Ginibi, marked a radical change in indigenous story telling. The autobiography of a woman who barely made it through school, who had spent her youthful years doing "gut-bustin" work in the bush, and having babies, revealed the kind of life that few white Australians had any knowledge of, and almost no one, black or white, wrote about. She dedicated the book to, "every black woman who's battled to raise a family and kept her sense of humour."

Ruby battled all her life, and kept her sense of humour all her life, whether in the twinkle of her dark eyes or the never far away roar of laughter. Leah Purcell's, one-woman show brilliantly reveals the essence of Ruby's life as she herself had done in her autobiography. In a script that is faithful to the text of the book, there is the joy, the sadness, the anger at injustice, but, as in her life, never a hint of self-pity.

Ruby was a member of the Bunjalong tribe of northern New South Wales, and was born on Box Ridge Mission, Coraki, one of the many institutions in which indigenous Australians were virtual prisoners in the government's genocidal treatment of the country's first inhabitants. Her mother, Evelyn, abandoned her when she was six-years-old, and she was brought up by her father and members of her extended family. The date, ironically was 26 January, Australia Day, when white Australians celebrate the arrival of the First Fleet, made up of convicts and settlers in 1788. Indigenous Australians know it as Invasion Day. Perhaps that coincidence of history was another factor that shaped Ruby's intractable character.

Later, her existence was that of the itinerate rural worker, and urban factory worker. She had her first child when she was seventeen. This is a story of amazing hardship and deprivation: sometimes the only home for her and an every growing number of children was a leaky tent or a battered car. Sometimes she was helped by the current man in her life, sometimes not — she famously wrote, "The men came and went; the babies came and stayed."

Alcohol is used by both indigenous men

and women to help dull the pain created by deliberate destruction of indigenous society by the colonists, it and the violence that is inseparable from it, dominated and still blights many lives, but, as Ruby said, the men could go, but the women had to stay with the kids.

These children measured out her life like milestones. On stage, Leah Purcell, ticks their names off on her fingers — nine of them. They were the heights of Ruby's joys and the depths of her sorrows. Three died tragically. One son has spent much of his life in and out of jail and battling substance abuse and alcoholism.

Ruby's intelligence was evident as a child and she looked set to go through high school and do something unthinkable from someone of her background, become a schoolteacher. Imagine, the onstage Ruby said, black kids being taught by a black teacher, imagine *white* kids being taught by a black teacher. But that was not to be. Instead she had to leave school and work to help the family.

Purcell created delight, then before the smiles of the audience had started to fade, she snatched the delight from them and collapsed in grief as yet another tragedy struck. Ruby's moments of joy were simple enough, the birth of a child, a regular income from a job, drinking and yarning, the acquisition of a rented room for her, the kids and often as not some other relatives; a man who stayed with her longer than a few months. She married — but only once.

The monologue is firmly grounded in Ruby's details of the reality that was her life; the names of people, streets, towns, a job won in a factory sewing trousers for a household name brand of clothing, a job lost. Even a shopping list sings out and becomes an indicator of what the basics of life were, and how difficult they were to obtain.

Purcell brought to the role the skills of a superb actor, steeped in her own culture and community as well as the life experiences of who personally experienced many of the same hardships as Ruby. Both women embody the



indefatigable spirit that is indigenous Australia. Like Ruby, Purcell was a teenage mother. And, like Ruby, she battled early alcohol dependency and suffered domestic violence. Purcell was born in Murgon, Queensland, the youngest of seven children to an Aboriginal mother and a white Australian father, a butcher and a boxing trainer. Her grandmother was a stolen child — a government forced-assimilation policy — who was eventually incarcerated in a mission at Cherbourg, Queensland.

Purcell gained prominence when she co-wrote and acted in an autobiographical one-woman play, *Box the Pony*, which was performed in Australia and at the Edinburgh Festival.

In 2012 she appeared in *Redfern Now*, on Australian TV, the first such series written, directed and produced by indigenous Australians, created in collaboration with legendary British screenwriter Jimmy McGovern, of *Cracker* and the award winning, *The Street*, fame.

Ruby added many more titles to her first book. She ended the autobiography by saying that writing it had lifted a weight from her mind, not only because she had examined her own life and knew who she was, "but because it may help better the relationship between the Aboriginal and white people."

The dramatisation of her story is one more step in that direction. Sadly Ruby Langford Ginibi did not live to see the triumph; she died in October 2011 and is buried in Sydney.

# Rae Hunter

*This is the speech Bill Hunter made at the memorial meeting on 22 June 1992 for Rae Hunter.*



Rae Ryan, from Socialist Appeal November 1941. The article says that she was a delegate from West London Shop Stewards Committee to a union conference and argued for workers' interests against the class collaboration line of the Stalinists

Yesterday a comrade was able to ask me how it was that Rae, after over fifty years, was expressing her ideas and taking action with the same freshness of conviction that she must have had when she first joined the socialist movement.

She had, as everyone bears witness, not a trace of scepticism. And this, in a period when scepticism, cynicism, and self seeking is the hall mark of the right-wing in the labour movement internationally, and, together with paralysis, is a disease of some of the so-called left in the Labour party.

She began work in 1937 as a nurse in a hospital in Paddington, London. She saw at first hand the worst aspects of poverty and living conditions next to an area of fashionable shops and expensive residences.

Like many of the sensitive young people of the period, she felt keenly the threat of war and destruction. Like a number of the youth who joined the Trotskyist movement, her course first went through a pacifist rejection of war.

Rae's sister introduced her to Trotskyism, which she saw as many people here saw at one time in their lives, as like a blinding light upon the burning questions of the day. She was possessed of a desire to change the world, which was expressed, for her, not just in an academic way, but in actions.

She actually fought her way in to the Trotskyist movement, into the Workers International League, a small group, mainly in London. Her sister, and others, whose names are known to comrades here, were members – Jock Haston, Ted Grant, Heaton Lee, Millie Lee and Gerry Healy.

## A great deal of courage

There was a great deal of courage in Rae, more in some ways than I can claim. I can tell a story to help me get through this speech. Rae had open-heart surgery in 1978 after she had been very ill. The surgeon had promised he would phone me immediately after the operation. I got a phone call but it was earlier than I expected. It was a phone call from Rae who was speaking as she was being taken to the operating room. She said: "Hello, Hello Bill. I'm just about to have my pre-med. Now I've phoned the boys to keep in touch with you. Don't worry. You will be alright!"

She never made a mean or malicious remark or committed a personally vindictive act. I think it's absolutely true of her that she left no personal enemies – any enemies she had would be political. There was this objectivity.

Like most of us among the youth who came to Trotskyism at that time, she was attracted by its conclusion that the crisis of humanity was the crisis of leadership. Her experiences of struggle and her will at that time to develop leadership assisted her in understanding this.

She felt, like other Trotskyist youth of the time, that in order to develop leadership they had to go to work on the factory floor. She left the hospital and went into an engineering factory. That was a big leap for a middle class girl; it was no different to that made by many other girls who were later conscripted into the factories, but on her part it was conscious.

That leap also made the most militant of people. So she moved through a decision and a fight to join the movement and a fight to go into the working class to become a leader. Decisions like these helped to mould her.

They didn't form a personally aggressive, noisy woman. They formed a woman who underneath was very, very determined; who moved steadily along the road she set for herself and in the end did what she wanted to do.

The conclusions went straight into practice with Rae. The members of the Miners Support group [1984 to 1985], during the miners' strike would tell you that. We had a big support group and we went round, knocking on doors, discussing and collecting food and money. Everybody was concerned about Rae and would ask at times: "Where is she. Is she all right?"

But Rae would be halfway down the street, knocking on doors before others had started and coming back again and again with her bags full of food.

She was an internationalist. That is why, without hesitation she went with me to Argentina in 1989. And she felt at home there; her only regret was that she never mastered the language to be able to participate as fully in working class struggles as she would have wanted.

To the end of her life, she had confidence that the working class revolution throughout the world would emancipate humanity. She was confident it would reach the heights of creating a powerful International.

The conclusion that she grasped at the end of the thirties was that the working class had all the capacities to fight for socialism, and the crisis of humanity lay in the crisis of working class leadership. That conclusion, continually reinvigorated by her experience of struggle, remained with her to the end of her life. And the firmness with which she grasped it, gave her a continuous freshness in fighting for it.



## Lifelong Apprenticeship - Life and Times of a Revolutionary

by Bill Hunter

These pages are crowded with thumbnail sketches of Trotskyist and working class fighters of the period before, during and after the second world war.

Lifelong Apprentice shows Hunter's part in the international struggles of the Fourth International against capitalism and Stalinism, and includes an inside account of the Trotskyists' response

There is a chapter in this book on Rae Hunter

Price £5 including P&P ISL, c/o News from Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY

## Bill Hunter's Archives

Rae Hunter's life is interwoven with great historical events for the working class. She was born in 1917 on 10 December just after the Russian October revolution and she was active in the Trotskyist and Labour movement for 55 years. She was a Trotskyist during the 2nd World War and her sister, a Trotskyist at that time, was jailed during the war for helping a strike during the war. She died just after the highly contradictory events that destroyed the stalinist bureaucracy in Soviet Union which had helped destroy so many revolutionary movements and revolutions.

The article below was written for the Socialist Voice in 1989 by Rae Hunter. The article shows she knew where the attacks on public health were leading if the workers' socialist struggle did not stop them. See the next page for further material on Rae.

### Patients for Sale

The Government launched its White Paper on the National Health Service on 1 February 1989. Margaret Thatcher called it "the most far reaching reform of the National Health Service in its forty-year history". The Government declares it will extend patient care and reduce waiting lists. Yes! - for those with money it will provide these things, but for the poor, the old, the mentally disabled and the chronically ill the life-line will be severed.

The NHS was a product of the strength of the working class who had been through six bitter years of the Second World War and had made it plain they would not go back to the misery of the thirties.

The destruction of this Health Service is not a sudden thing. For years hospitals have been under attack. The process began under Labour Governments and is now being brought to fruition by the Tories.

Between 1969 and 1974, 121 hospitals were closed in England and Wales. Between 1976 and 1978, these figures leapt up. There were 143 closures or changes of use.

Up till 1983, the NHS administration was based on a team management concept. Districts and Regions were run by District and regional teams of officers drawn from the different areas of the Health Service - administration, nursing, finance and medicine. The teams worked in took decisions by consensus of opinion.

In 1983, the Tory Government

changed this method. They appointed Ray Griffiths, Managing Director of Sainsbury's supermarket chain, to refashion the NHS. He wanted "business management" and was opposed to consensus. He recommended the appointment of General Managers. This method was extended right through, even to hospital wards.

Managers who increased performance to lower cost were given financial incentives.

One of the ways of saving money has been employment practices. Some 70 per cent of the Health Service budget goes on wages. In 1984, the number of NHS employees fell by more than 1,500 and in 1985 there was a further reduction of 3,300.

Comparing 1987 with 1982, 25,000 jobs of ancillary workers went. Their jobs were lost in contracts to private enterprise.

The main proposals of the White Paper are as follows: major hospitals will be able to apply for a new self-governing status. They will be free to set rates of pay for their own staff. They will be able to offer their services to other parts of the NHS and to the private sector.

Because they will have an incentive to attract patients, it is evident that if the elderly, the chronically ill etc. have no money then they will not get a look-in. The free Health Service which working people fought for is going to be practically destroyed.

The other most important change will be for general practitioners. They can

have a special budget to choose how the money is spent. The method can be exploited for gain by unprincipled GPs, but the majority would most likely feel like Dr Roland in the "Independent" of 31 January, 1989

"What will happen when the budget runs out?" he asked, and went on, "It would change the relationship with patients. At the moment, when you go to a doctor you assume he is making a judgement based on your need for medical care.

"With a budget, patients would know the GP is also influenced by how much money he has left that year. Many patients as well as doctors would feel that unacceptable."

One of the worst aspects of the White Paper is the further rationing of prescriptions. If the GP's allocation of money for drugs runs out, what then?

Involved in the movement of the hospital workers in 1988 was the question, should the NHS be carved up and run for profit or should it be for the benefit of the working class communities with decent conditions and wages for hospital workers?

In 1989 the Tory Government has made it clear what it thinks should be done with the NHS.

It is up to the health service unions and the labour movement to answer by building on the movement of last year and uniting more and more of the communities that will suffer under the Tory plans to defeat the attacks on OUR NHS.

**For more information or to join the ISL, Email: [isinfo@talktalk.net](mailto:isinfo@talktalk.net)  
or, write to: ISL c/o News from Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY  
<http://internationalsocialistleague.org.uk>**