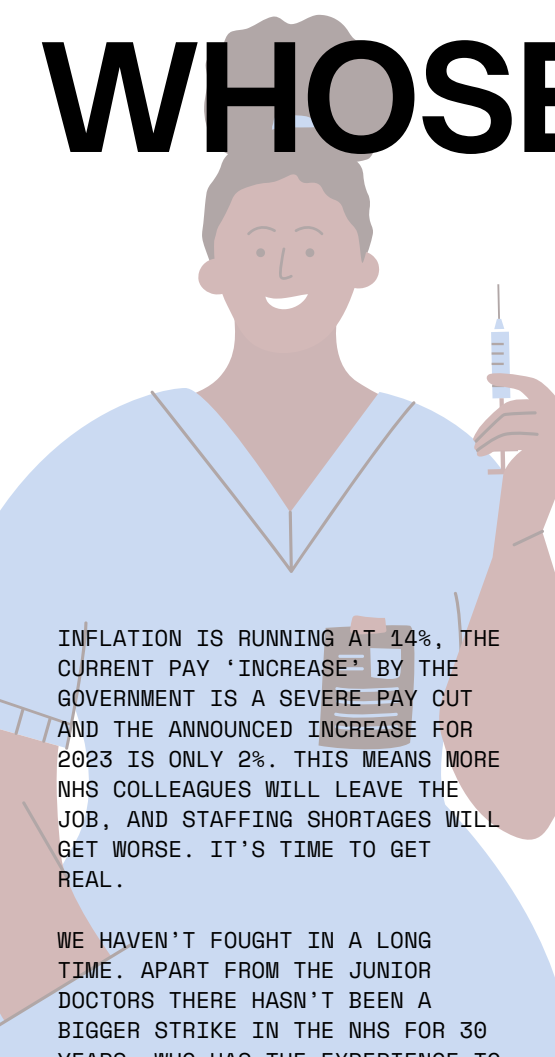


WHOSE STRIKE IS IT?



IN THE END MOST UNIONS IN SCOTLAND CALLED OFF INDUSTRIAL ACTION AND PUSHED MEMBERS INTO YET ANOTHER BALLOT.

IN ENGLAND, THE RCN CALLED FOR STRIKES ON THE 15TH AND 20TH OF DECEMBER, BUT DECIDED THAT NOT ALL MEMBERS WHO VOTED FOR STRIKE WILL ACTUALLY JOIN. UNISON DIDN'T MANAGE TO MOBILISE MORE THAN 40% OF THEIR OWN MEMBERS TO VOTE AND FAILED TO MEET THE LEGAL THRESHOLD IN MOST TRUSTS. SENDING EMAILS AND CALLING INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AT HOME IS NOT ENOUGH TO CREATE THE COLLECTIVE SPIRIT NECESSARY TO ORGANISE A STRIKE - NONE OF US SAW ANY VISIBLE PAY RALLIES IN AND OUTSIDE HOSPITALS IN THE RUN UP TO THE VOTE. THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE HAPPY THAT THE UNIONS KEEP WORKERS APART LIKE THIS.

SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

WE NEED OPEN & INDEPENDENT ASSEMBLIES

WE NEED INDEPENDENT AND OPEN ASSEMBLIES IN EACH HOSPITAL OR DEPARTMENT, OPEN TO ALL WORKERS, REGARDLESS OF PROFESSION OR UNION MEMBERSHIP, TO DISCUSS HOW THIS STRUGGLE SHOULD BE ORGANISED.

IN FRANCE IN THE EARLY 90S, HEALTH WORKERS MANAGED TO COORDINATE ASSEMBLIES LIKE THIS ON A NATIONAL LEVEL - BEFORE WHATSAPP OR THE INTERNET. LET'S TURN THE RCN PICKETS IN MID-DECEMBER INTO ASSEMBLIES - OR ORGANISE THEM INDEPENDENTLY IF NECESSARY.

AT THE ASSEMBLY WE CAN TAKE STOCK OF WHICH WARDS AND DEPARTMENTS ARE PRESENT AND MAKE SURE WE INVITE DELEGATES FROM THOSE THAT ARE ABSENT. WE CAN DISCUSS CONCRETE DEMANDS AND DIFFERENT ACTIONS TO ENFORCE THEM, FROM OVERTIME BOYCOTT, WORK-TO-RULE, TO STRIKE. WE CAN

DISCUSS WHETHER TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE UNIONS TO BACK OUR DECISIONS OR TO GO IT ALONE. WE COULD FIGURE OUT HOW TO COORDINATE WITH ASSEMBLIES IN OTHER TRUSTS.

DURING RECENT HOSPITAL STRIKES IN GERMANY, WE COULD SEE HOW STRONG A STRIKE CAN BE IF DELEGATES FROM EACH WARD COORDINATE THE STRUGGLE TOGETHER. AS A RESULT OF THE STRIKES, WORKERS NOW GET A DAY OFF FOR EVERY FIVE SHIFTS THAT HAVE BEEN UNDERSTAFFED. STRIKES IN HOSPITALS ARE TRICKY, BUT THEY CAN BE EFFECTIVE WITHOUT PUTTING LIVES AT RISK.

THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT. IF THOUSANDS OF NHS WORKERS WOULD SUPPORT THE CURRENT STRIKES AT ROYAL MAIL, UNIVERSITIES, RAILWAYS AND FOOD FACTORIES BY BLOCKADING SORTING OFFICES, STATION ENTRANCES OR FACTORY GATES, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE IN TROUBLE. IN ARGENTINA, HEALTH WORKERS AND TEACHERS BLOCKADED MAIN ROADS TO OIL FIELDS AND TOURIST RESORTS TO CAUSE FINANCIAL LOSSES FOR THE GOVERNMENT. BY DOING SO, THEY MANAGED TO ENFORCE A MASSIVE PAY INCREASE.

THESE ARE BOLD ACTIONS. IT WON'T BE EASY, AND THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF PEOPLE TRYING TO DAMPEN DOWN ANY KIND OF BOLDNESS AND INITIATIVE. BUT WE, AS NHS WORKERS, NEED TO BE CLEAR WHAT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ACTUALLY WIN, RATHER THAN SETTLE FOR SOME CRAPPY DEAL.


THESE ARE NEW TIMES THAT FORCE US ALL TO LEARN TOGETHER. WRITE TO US AND TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS AND WHAT IS HAPPENING AT YOUR WORKPLACE.

WE WILL PUBLISH REPORTS ANONYMOUSLY ON OUR BLOG.

EMAIL US AT:

HEALTHWORKERSUNITED@PROTONMAIL.COM

WE ARE NHS HEALTHCARE WORKERS WHO WANT TO BE ABLE TO TELL IT LIKE IT IS. WE'RE NOT THE VOICE OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY OR TRADE UNION.



INFLATION IS RUNNING AT 14%, THE CURRENT PAY 'INCREASE' BY THE GOVERNMENT IS A SEVERE PAY CUT AND THE ANNOUNCED INCREASE FOR 2023 IS ONLY 2%. THIS MEANS MORE NHS COLLEAGUES WILL LEAVE THE JOB, AND STAFFING SHORTAGES WILL GET WORSE. IT'S TIME TO GET REAL.

WE HAVEN'T FOUGHT IN A LONG TIME. APART FROM THE JUNIOR DOCTORS THERE HASN'T BEEN A BIGGER STRIKE IN THE NHS FOR 30 YEARS. WHO HAS THE EXPERIENCE TO ORGANISE THE STRUGGLE? A SUCCESSFUL STRUGGLE NEEDS UNITED ACTION BY WORKERS ON DIFFERENT BANDS, IN DIFFERENT TRUSTS, IN DIFFERENT UNIONS. IF WE LOOK AT WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN THE LAST MONTH WE CAN SEE THAT THE UNIONS WON'T BE ABLE TO ORGANISE THIS UNITY.

SO, WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

AFTER PRESSURE, THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO INCREASE THE ANNUAL WAGE BY £2,200, COMPARED TO £1,400 IN ENGLAND. GIVEN THE INFLATION RATE, THIS WOULD STILL BE A REAL PAY CUT. MEMBERS OF MOST UNIONS REFUSED THIS PAY 'INCREASE' AND VOTED FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION. UNISON OFFICIALS IGNORED THIS, NEGOTIATED A LOWER INCREASE FOR BAND 5 AND ABOVE AND RECOMMENDED THAT MEMBERS ACCEPT THE OFFER, WHILE THE OTHER BIG UNION, THE RCN, RECOMMENDED TO REFUSE. IN THE AMBULANCE SERVICE, THE GMB AND UNITE DID NOT COORDINATE THEIR STRIKE ACTION SO AS TO STRIKE ON THE SAME DAY.

DECEMBER
2022

WE ARE LOCAL HEALTH WORKERS.
CHECK OUT OUR BLOG:
WWW.HEALTHWORKERSUNITED.WORDPRESS.COM

THE BIGGER PICTURE

WE SEE THAT MORE STRIKES ARE HAPPENING, FROM UNIVERSITIES TO RAILWAYS TO THE POSTAL SERVICES. THESE STRIKES ARE A CHANCE TO COME TOGETHER ACROSS SECTORS AND DISCUSS WHAT WE, AS WORKERS, CAN DO TO CHANGE THE CURRENT SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE OF DOOM.

ARE THE CURRENT STRIKES POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DEFEND OUR WAGES AGAINST INFLATION AND ATTACKS LIKE 'FIRE AND RE-HIRE'? WE OFTEN SEE THAT STRIKES BY DIFFERENT UNIONS AND SECTORS ARE NOT COORDINATED AND END UP BEING ISOLATED. WE OFTEN SEE THAT THE UNIONS' FEAR TO BREAK THE STRICT STRIKE LAWS MAKE OUR STRUGGLE LESS EFFECTIVE. WE OFTEN SEE THAT FELLOW WORKERS GET FRUSTRATED, BECAUSE THE DECISIONS OF HOW TO ORGANISE THE STRIKE ARE MADE NOT BY THE STRIKERS, BUT BY THE UNION LEADERS.

WE NEED TO REFLECT ON THESE QUESTIONS TOGETHER AND INDEPENDENTLY, AS MOST ORGANISATIONS HAVE THEIR OWN INTEREST WHEN IT COMES TO STRIKES: THEY ONLY WANT TO RECRUIT US AS MEMBERS OR VOTERS. THEY DON'T HAVE AN INTEREST IN US UNDERSTANDING AND LEADING OUR OWN STRUGGLES.

BUT IT IS NOT ALL ABOUT WAGES. THE LAW TELLS US THAT 'POLITICAL STRIKES' ARE ILLEGAL. THEY WANT TO KEEP US IN A BOX. AS WORKERS WE ARE SUPPOSED TO ONLY CARE ABOUT OUR BREAD AND BUTTER. BUT AS 'ESSENTIAL WORKERS' IN HEALTH, TRANSPORT, FOOD PRODUCTION OR MANUFACTURING, WE KNOW HOW SOCIETY IS RUN AND WE HAVE THE POTENTIAL POWER, KNOWLEDGE AND TOGETHERNESS TO CHANGE IT FOR THE BETTER.

THE CURRENT MOMENT IS DANGEROUS. WE SEE AN ESCALATING GLOBAL CRISIS. THE FIGHT OVER MARKETS TURNS INTO WARS, THE CLIMATE CRISIS LOOMS. THE SCARY THING IS THAT WE ARE IN A MESS NOT MAINLY BECAUSE POWERFUL AND RICH PEOPLE HAVE AN INTEREST IN KEEPING THINGS AS THEY ARE. THE SCARY THING IS THAT EVEN



THOSE WHO WE SEE AS POWERFUL, FROM POLITICIANS TO BIG CORPORATIONS, ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION. THIS SOCIETY IS RUN IN SUCH A FRACTURED WAY - DISJOINTED BY MILLIONS OF SEPARATED COMPANIES, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, LOCAL AND NATIONAL MARKETS, WOBBLING ON FLUCTUATING SHARE AND CURRENCY VALUES - THAT NO ONE CAN CLAIM TO BE IN CONTROL. THE CHAOTIC REACTIONS TO THE PANDEMIC, TO GLOBAL SUPPLY-CHAIN ISSUES AND CLIMATE CHANGE PROVE THIS.

BUT THE CURRENT MOMENT IS FULL OF HOPE. WE, AS SO-CALLED 'ESSENTIAL' WORKERS, KNOW HOW TO RUN THINGS AND COULD DO IT MUCH BETTER IF WE WOULD NOT HAVE TO DEAL WITH PROFIT MARGINS AND MANAGEMENT HIERARCHIES. THE CURRENT STRIKES ARE ALSO A CHANCE TO DISCOVER THIS POTENTIAL. WE HAVE THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE MEANS TO PRODUCE OUR LIVES AND WREST THEM AWAY FROM THIS SYSTEM THAT NO ONE CONTROLS. IF EVERYONE WOULD WORK ONLY FOR SOCIALLY USEFUL PURPOSES, WE COULD ALL WORK MUCH LESS AND HAVE TIME TO LEARN AND ENJOY OUR LIVES.

IN THE END THIS IS A QUESTION OF POWER: WHO OWNS AND CONTROLS THE STUFF THAT WE USE TO PRODUCE THE CONDITIONS FOR LIFE? IF WE CAN LEAD AND COORDINATE EFFECTIVE STRIKES, DO WE USE THIS NEW POWER TO CHALLENGE THOSE WHO CLAIM TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR US? THE CURRENT STRIKES PUT THIS QUESTION ON THE TABLE AND PUT A SPOTLIGHT ON OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS WORKERS FOR THE FUTURE OF SOCIETY.

FOR SELF-EMANCIPATION AND A BETTER SOCIETY!