

# CHILD LABOUR SCANDAL

HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS of children under the age of 14 years are today at work worldwide, often in the most brutal conditions, a report from the International Labour Organisation has revealed. In the ten to 14 age range alone the figure is 73 million, almost one in seven of that age group, says the ILO.

## BY THE EDITOR

a growing proportion of the next generation. For example:

■ Every day, 35,000 children in the world die from diseases that could be cured by adequate nutrition and the most elementary health provisions, according to United Nations figures.

■ By the year 2015 over 160 million children aged six to eleven will be receiving no schooling, one in four of all children then expected to be in the world, according to the World Bank.

## Extent

The extent of child labour is growing rapidly throughout Africa and Latin America, as well as in central and eastern Europe, reports the ILO, which links the trend to growing economic insecurity and more flexible work practices.

This is where the rule of capital has taken humanity at the end of the millennium. The threat to the human race takes on ever more real and sinister meanings.

It is only a united fight by the international working class for a human standard of living for all that can do away with the need for child labour and safeguard the future of humanity against the degradations of capital.

There is no nobler struggle in the world today.

But this is only a tiny proportion of those involved, for reliable statistics for children under the age of ten are not available. Nor are there figures for the millions of children working in the home. In Africa, one in four of children in the ten to 14 year age group are now forced to work.

Many children are compelled to work in unbelievable conditions, such as forced labour, work with dangerous chemicals, as well as child prostitution.

In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, while child labour in the cities is on the increase it is even more widespread in rural areas where as many as nine out of ten children have to work in agricultural or related activities.

The ILO met last week in Geneva and issued yet more promises that 'action' would be taken against this situation. But the promises are worthless, and a cruel deception.

## Safeguards

Even on the ILO's own admission, only 49 countries out of its 173 members have ratified even the most minimum safeguards against the more brutal forms of child exploitation, including the convention that 15 shall be the minimum working age.

This is part of a situation where the capitalist system is literally crippling and killing

## JACK WILLIAMSON

IT IS WITH the greatest sadness that Workers Press has to report the death of comrade Jack Williamson last Friday after a long and courageous struggle against cancer. He was in his mid-50s at the time of his death. During the 1960s and 1970s, Jack had been a leading member of the Socialist Labour League and the Young Socialists, where he was a member of its national committee.

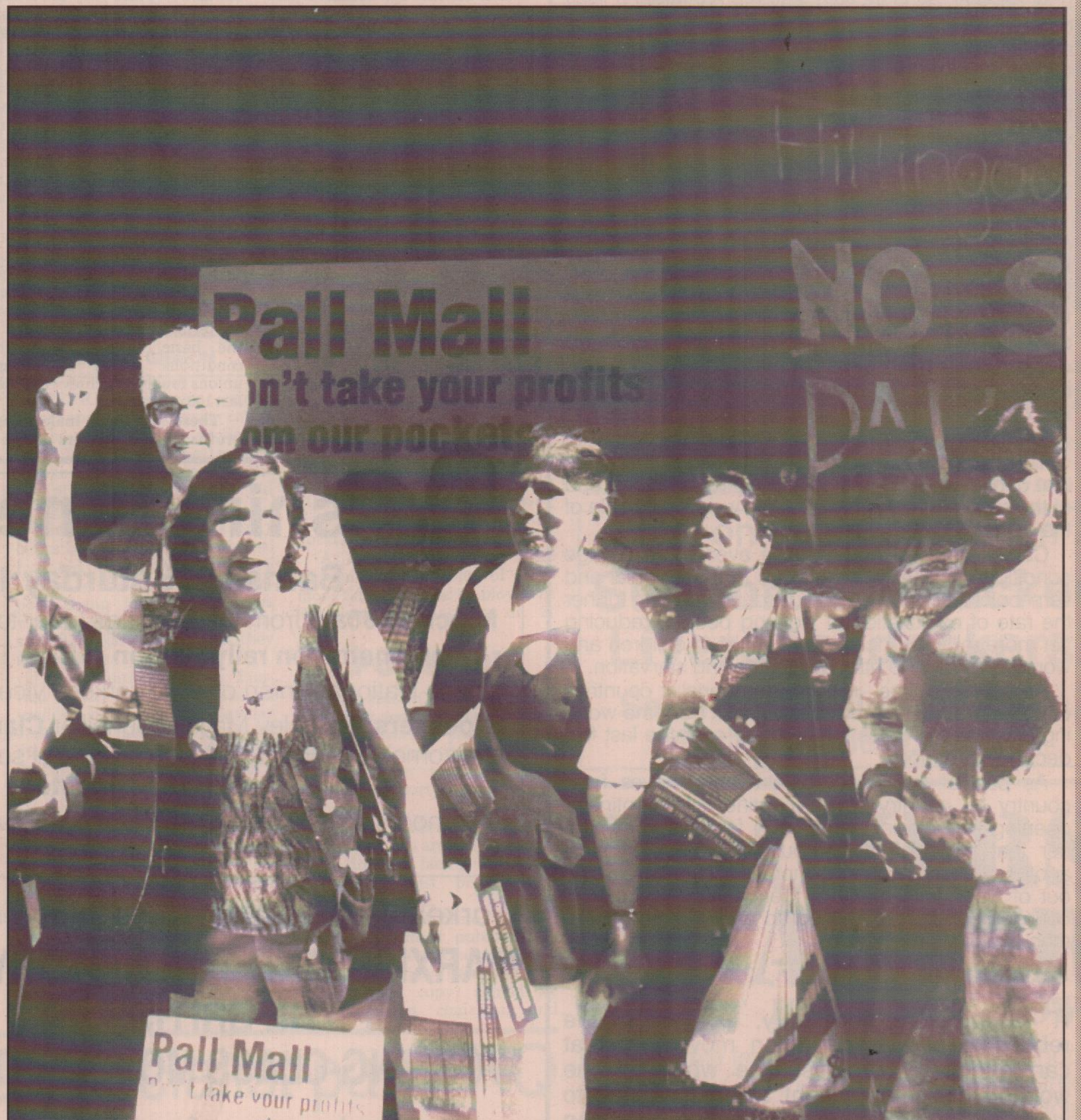
One of his last political activities was to attend the conference called by the Liverpool dockers on 27 April. He later told his family and friends that he was greatly inspired by the dockers' struggle and by the fact that many of his old comrades were still active in the fight of the working class. We send our deepest condolences to Jack's family and his many friends. A fuller tribute will appear in next week's paper.

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## Hillingdon protest



Sacked Hillingdon hospital workers picketed the shareholders' meeting of their employers Pall Mall on Friday 7 June. Like the Liverpool dockers they have been in dispute nine months. Photo: Ed Hall

## Down with casualisation!

Victory to the sacked Liverpool dockers!

Victory to the Hillingdon hospital workers!

Conference: Saturday 22 June, 11am-5pm, £2 (£1 unwaged)

International Students House, 229 Great Portland St.

(Grt. Portland St. tube)

## Conference details from:

Conference organiser Kim Hendry, c/o Lambeth Union, 6a Acre Lane, London SW2 5SG. Tel: 0171-226 9754.

Cheques/ money orders to 'London Support Group'. Send names and addresses and organisations represented.













