

## Government health bill spells disaster for patients and workers

# SAVE OUR NHS!

THE GOVERNMENT is planning a massive assault on the NHS in England in its latest health bill. This is on top of billions of pounds of 'efficiency savings' ie cuts, in the NHS budget.

Primary care trusts will be abolished and, instead, 80% of the NHS budget is to be administered by GPs (general practitioners). However, GPs, lacking the capacity or expertise to commission services on such a large scale, will soon be taken over by private companies. Consequently, the health bill will see a full-blown commercial health market established - a potential gold mine for private companies to muscle into the NHS and make big profits.

All the health workers' trade unions as well as the British Medical Association and the General Medical Council are largely opposed to these 'reforms'.

**A** LONDON HEALTH worker explains the likely impact of the government's NHS reorganisation on health services:

"UNDER NEW Labour every area had to have an open tender for at least one primary care practice. So where I live in Camden there is a major GP centre which is now run by an American health care company.

You also have private companies buying specific wings of hospitals. They will now have the ability to buy an entire hospital. Effectively all three cornerstones of the NHS ie primary care, commissioning and secondary/tertiary care will be owned by private companies. There is nothing in this legislation to stop that being the same private company.

For example, the GP centre in Camden that's owned by this US corporation will be given the Camden budget. It could, for instance, purchase the Royal Free Hospital and effectively commission itself to provide both the primary and secondary and hospital care.

The logical conclusion of all this is a cartel of private companies in the NHS. This is why you are seeing private health companies paying way over the odds for smaller competitors and paying way over the odds for

GP centres - because they see the potential for profits at every turn...."

### Static budgets, increasing need

"THE GOVERNMENT has imposed static budgets in the NHS despite increasing demands on services. But with health inflation running at 7.9% inevitably this is resulting in huge deficits.

Before Christmas I asked a top commissioning manager in the NHS if there will be a financial crisis in the next couple of years? She replied: 'Not in the next two years but in the next six months.'

Inevitably we will see hospital wards, departments and even entire hospitals being closed.

On top of this budget crisis comes the government's wholesale reorganisation. It will lead to anarchy. PCTs are already in a mess. They have lost half their staff. (Mainly lower and middle managers, the top managers have kept their posts and salaries.) Effectively nobody is presently holding the purse strings.

We will see massive increases in waiting times, people kept on trolleys in corridors, etc. It will be a return to the bad old days of the 1980s and 1990s."



photo Socialist Party

### We say:

- End all privatisation. Return privatised services to NHS control. Publicly fund and integrate them with the rest of the NHS.
- End Foundation Trusts. Build democratic control of local health services by elected health workers and community representatives as well as elected reps from local and national government.
- Nationalise the big construction companies, service companies, medical supply and pharmaceutical industries that are taking billions of pounds out of the NHS.
- Build anti-cuts unions in every area to defend the NHS. To save the NHS we need to work with the health unions, patients' organisations, those GP practices opposed to the changes, and the public, to start the fightback.

### whatwestandfor

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

#### Our demands include:

##### Work & Income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retire-

ment pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstatement the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

##### Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

##### Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

##### Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

##### New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

##### Socialism and Internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!