

NHS IN THE FIRING LINE

Build mass action to save our health service



One in eight nursing jobs is set to disappear photo Paul Mattsson

Roger Shrivess

The NHS is not safe in Con-Dem hands. A new Royal College of Nursing (RCN) report warns that one in eight of all nursing jobs are set to disappear in the next three years. The government puts 'saving' £20 billion from NHS budgets above saving nurses' jobs or patients' lives.

Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust is axing 300 nurses and many trusts have similar aims. Also in the firing line would be doctors, midwives and other vital frontline clinical staff. 50,000 jobs are on the chopping block.

Cuts put patients' safety at risk.

Hospital infections may become more virulent as staff already have scarcely enough time to do basic duties.

Intensification of labour has reached our hospital wards. Almost 95% of nurses told a recent survey that they worked over their contracted hours - 20% did that on every shift. Nurses were working when they were unwell.

Even Peter Carter, general secretary of the traditionally non-striking RCN, says that nurses could take action such as only working their contracted 37.5 hours a week.

Many trusts are using cheaper or unregulated workers to cut costs. Private firms are making massive

profits out of the problems. Temp agencies are making fortunes - some increasing profits by over 1,000% - by supplying temporary doctors and nurses to hospitals hit by staff cuts.

All these are before the NHS feels the real effects of the internal market, which puts private companies' interests above those of patients and NHS workers.

This is already a crisis. The whole trade union movement needs to take action to safeguard our vital public services such as the NHS.

Health workers, NHS users and campaigners, should use their power to safeguard our NHS. We need a return to the massive demonstrations against the hospital closures

and privatisation under the last Labour government.

And the trade unions should take a decisive lead on this. Trade unionists should organise a protest, better still a one-day strike, against what the Con-Dems are doing to the NHS.

This would be the most effective reply during the three-month pause for 'consultation' announced after the 26 March TUC demonstration.

No to Con-Dem attacks on the NHS! Build anti-cuts unions in every area, working with health unions, patients organisations and those GP practices opposed to the attacks to defend the NHS and the public. It's our NHS - help save it.

Vote socialist to fight the cuts

Rob Windsor

Socialist Alternative candidate, St Michael's ward, Coventry

The office of Coventry Connections, the youth advice service, is boarded up. A wall of chipboard greets passers by. The New Labour council's cuts are already biting.

WATCH, a group managed by local people in Hillfields, worked hard to rebuild a community shattered by unemployment and poverty in Thatcher's Britain. This week it was closed down after funding dried up.

WATCH used to be showcased by Labour councils, now it has been abandoned by them. All that was offered was a 'bridging loan'. As a founding member said: "how can an agency with no funding pay back a loan? I'd love to find an organisation that provides funds for this".

1,000 workers in Coventry still have this threat of redundancy hanging over them, many are women over 50 who may never work again.

The Con-Dems are the main villains after cutting grants but New Labour would only have cut 'more slowly'. The selling off of council housing, student fees, PFI in hospitals and academies were all road-tested by the last Labour government.

In Coventry one councillor, socialist Dave Nellist, voted against the cuts. Our election campaign, part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaign, is standing in all 18 seats up for election in Coventry.

It seeks to provide a louder anti-cuts voice on the council to represent a stronger anti-cuts movement in workplaces and communities.

Vote TUSC

The TUSC election alliance was set up last year, backed by leading members of the RMT transport workers' union, the PCS civil servants' union, the National Union of Teachers and the POA prison officers' union. TUSC is standing 154 candidates in local elections across the country.

See www.tusc.org.uk and page 5 for more details.

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION