

Stop Con-Dems' assault on NHS

NO HEALTH CUTS

NO PRIVATISATION

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Hardly a day goes by without some report outlining the crisis facing the National Health Service. This crisis is a consequence of the drive toward privatisation and the most severe financial cuts in the NHS's history under the government's health 'reforms'.

Even NHS financial directors are predicting massive job losses, ward closures, and drastic service cuts as they struggle to make savage 'efficiency cuts' and prepare for the re-organisation of the NHS - ie privatisation. In fact, primary care trusts (PCTs) are already frantically cutting services in order to balance the books before they are due to be replaced by GP consortiums.

One of the ways that cuts are being made is the 'rationalisation of operations', a move that has been severely criticised by the Federation of Surgical Speciality Associations (FSSA), which represents about 15,000 surgeons.

According to FSSA an increasing number of patients are being denied surgery, including hips, spinal and even some cancer surgery.

In order to cut costs some PCTs are even restricting the number of patients who can have a hysterectomy, or even have babies with a planned caesarean section. Increasingly these surgical procedures are

deemed to have a low or no clinical value, despite evidence to the contrary. It can safely be predicted that the definition of 'low value surgical procedures' will be expanded to cover much of what the NHS provides as the financial crisis deepens.

Of course this is all good news for the private sector.

One major health company, Spire Healthcare, recently conducted a survey of over 500 GPs which discovered that not only were cuts being made to the so-called 'non urgent' operations, but also waiting times were rising remorselessly for a whole series of treatments, including cardiology and oncology (cancer treatment). Increasingly, more patients will go private in order to receive care, creating demand and profit for the ruthless health care corporations.

Foundation trusts

Also, anticipating this development, foundation hospitals are planning to expand the provision of private health care now that the Tories have lifted the cap on it. This all adds up to the end of comprehensive NHS provision, and the acceleration of a two-tier service - one for the rich, and one for the rest of us.

Although the government is now saying it will 'pause and listen', in reality there is no slowing down in the implementation of their plan. While it may be slightly modified, the thrust and goal remain the same.



Government health 'reforms' will wreck the NHS photo Paul Mattsson

That is, NHS finances will be transferred to GP-based consortiums, themselves likely to be absorbed by private companies.

These organisations, accountable only to shareholders, will purchase the cheapest possible care from the private sector, or foundation trusts, who themselves are in transition towards private health care companies. In effect it is a complete programme of privatisation which will

have a devastating impact on all our lives.

The government has declared war on the NHS and in response the health unions should be mounting a massive campaign, including strike action, to defend the NHS and those who work in it. Socialist Party members will continue to demand a one-day public sector strike as part of an overall strategy to defeat this rotten coalition government.

We say:

- Stop the cuts. For a fully funded, publicly owned NHS

- End all privatisation through GP consortiums or other methods

- Return privatised services to NHS control. Publicly fund and integrate them with the rest of the NHS

- For united action to defend the NHS involving trade unions, anti-cuts campaigns and service users

What we stand for

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 and 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

retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate 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!