

HANDS OFF OUR NHS!

Frankie Langeland

The government recently announced a plan to sell NHS patient information to private companies. They argue that allowing private life science companies access to this information could “potentially give the NHS early access to new, innovative drugs treatments.”

But, as we are now getting used to, the first priority of the Tories is not patient care. Cameron isn't selling the information to reinvest money into the health service - the only charge will be to cover the cost to the NHS.

On top of this Cameron is creating a £180 million “catalyst fund” for companies to bid for to help get projects started! This is at a time when hospitals across the country have made huge cutbacks. In November the RCN nurses' organisation reported that 50,000 NHS jobs had either already gone or were at risk of being cut.

The proposals state that the information will be anonymous, however all patients would automatically be in the scheme and would have to opt out rather than in. The Con-

Dem government is forgetting that this is not their data to sell!

This is our personal information that we trust to health professionals, doctors, nurses and our families and friends, not information that we want handed over to private companies.

Selling off our personal information is just another step in the privatisation of the NHS. We have all seen what private companies do to the services we rely on.

Britain, like the rest of the world, has the potential to make great advances in medicine. However we will never be able to achieve this in a profit-driven system.

Instead of working together private companies divide skilled pharmacists, doctors, scientists and researchers, putting them into direct competition, often not looking for cures and treatments for diseases but creating and marketing diet pills and cosmetics which provide higher profits.

Not only does capitalism divide the skilled workers we already have and turn their attention to less vital projects, but tuition fees and the removal of EMA student payments are closing doors to a new generation of



photo Suzanne Beishon

scientists that should be taking the next steps in medical research.

The Socialist Party is fighting back against the privatisation of the NHS, in whatever form it takes. We support workers organising action

against the attacks of big business and the Con-Dems and say no to anyone profiting from our personal information.

Thousands of NHS workers took strike action on 30 November along-

side other public sector workers. This gave a glimpse of the massive potential power of the working class to reverse and stop privatisation. More action like that will have to be organised to defend our NHS.

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. Reinstating 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 and 'free schools'!
- 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!