

DEFEND THE NHS!

Fight the Con-Dem cuts

IN HIS attempt to win support for the Con-Dem health bill, David Cameron was everywhere, rushing around TV and radio stations and newspaper offices, trying to defend the Con-Dems' plans to 'modernise' the NHS in England - straight back into the 1930s. Dave claimed widespread support for the proposals and that professionals are 'on board'.

But it is understood that what health minister Andrew Lansley has in mind is cuts, privatisation and the end of the NHS. It seems that the hundreds of thousands of pounds donated to the Tories by private health companies, such as the £21,000 from Care UK to fund Lansley's office when he was shadow health secretary, have had an impact!

The bill was backed by 321 to 235 at its second parliamentary reading but still has further stages to go. But polls show that less than one third of the rest of us are in favour and many NHS workers and their unions have spoken out in opposition. This opposition must be turned into action - on 26 March and through building a mass campaign to save the NHS. Here a mental health professional gives one example to show what health cuts will mean.

THERE IS a great deal of anger among frontline workers and team managers about the scale and the pace of these swingeing cuts. Team managers are openly admitting that they don't know how they will organise things and support staff through these cuts. They state that 'structures are disappearing', 'there is nowhere to seek advice' and 'we are muddling through on our own and doing our best'.

In one small part of a south London NHS trust there is a very familiar pattern. The eating disorder rehabilitation service is to be shut down completely. This news came out of the blue to a very shocked group of staff and patients.

Staff described the speed and stealth of this decision and how they didn't even know what part of the consultation process they were in. They were also advised not to tell anyone outside of their service of the planned closure, leading them to believe that they didn't even have the right to contact their union.

These workers quickly came to the realisation that they had been duped and unfairly treated by trust management.

It was heartening to witness these brave women workers challenge the service director head-on during the consultation meeting.

The closure of this eating disorder rehab service is going ahead full steam in spite of the fact that there is evidence that when patients go through the doors of this service they completely recover and are never readmitted to in-patient services. It is well-documented that eating disorder patients have the highest mortality rates of all psychiatric patients.



Health workers fighting the cuts.

photo Paul Mattsson

But all of this has been entirely rejected by senior management who say they are shutting the service in spite of the 'very good outcomes'.

The directors also said to staff that it would be 'highly inappropriate' for them to meet with service users and carers to discuss their

decision and there is 'no requirement' for the trust to do so. 'No decision about me without me' certainly doesn't seem to fit with the current realities of the way these NHS patients are being treated.

One service worker confided that she has experienced bullying and intimidation from the service

director. The first time this happened she cried but the second time she stood her ground and defended her service. She has now put herself forward to be a Unison rep as she has lost any illusions previously held that the heads of this particular NHS Trust operate in a fair and just manner.

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 & 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 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!