

HANDS OFF OUR NHS!



Nurses marching on 26 March photo Paul Mattsson

The Con-Dems are intent on attacking us on every front. The cuts to the health service will cost lives. Despite promising to 'ring-fence' the NHS, billions of pounds of 'efficiency savings' initiated by the previous Labour government have been viciously continued by the Con-Dems. Tens of thousands of health workers' jobs will disappear and whole wards are being closed.

The push to convert all NHS hospitals to 'Foundation Trust' status - initiated by the last New Labour government - will reinforce the NHS's 'internal market' (in which private health care companies now have a significant stake). Private contractors are drooling at the prospect.

The government's white paper: 'Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS' proposes changes that will effectively hand over the bulk of the health budget to privately run corporations whose profit-driven motive will result in further cutbacks and the break-up of the NHS as we know it. Even top doctors have warned that this will create major problems.

Opposition to the white paper has also made it onto YouTube in MC Nxt Gen's online hit 'the Andrew Lansley rap' which includes the following verse:

Lansley's white paper: 'Liberating the NHS' sets out a plan where we'll become more like the US and care will be farmed out to private companies, who will sell their service to the NHS via the GPs, who will have more to do with service purchase arrangements than anything to do with seeing their patients.

The government will face enormous anger from NHS workers, trade unions, and the wider community in trying to implement these plans. Many on the 26 March TUC demonstration held placards demanding an end to the job cuts, closures and privatisation in the NHS. United action against cuts, including to the NHS, can stop these plans.

We demand:

- No to Con-Dem attacks on the NHS!
- End NHS job losses and low pay. Give health workers an above-inflation pay increase. Defend pensions.
- Abolish the business competition of 'internal market', trusts, and 'payment by results'.
- 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.
- 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. Bring them under working class control and management.
- 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.
- For socialist planning to end poverty and inequality - the biggest killers and causes of ill health.

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!
- 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!