

BATTLE FOR THE NHS!

David Cameron has made clearer than ever what side he's on regarding the NHS. "It is because I love the NHS so much that I want to change it," he said. This speech spelt out that only very minor compromises, if any, will be made to the privatisation agenda in the Health and Social Care Bill during its 'pause' in Parliament. It has also been revealed that one of his advisers explicitly told a conference in October that the 're-organisation' of the NHS will result in big opportunities for the private sector and that the NHS will become a "state

insurance provider, not a state deliverer", showing the real intentions of the Con-Dems. However, almost half the population supports strikes over public sector cuts. And a survey of 2,000 nurses and midwives in the trade union Unison showed that almost three-quarters are prepared to take industrial action to protect their pensions. Anger over the NHS is growing and Cameron & Co will have a fight on their hands. Here, an experienced nurse paints a picture of cuts biting hard and working class people suffering.

I have been a registered mental health nurse since 1999. I have always worked in the NHS, either in a hospital or in the community. I have worked at staff nurse and team manager level (similar to ward sister). I now work as a community mental health nurse due to redeployment after my service was cut to save money.

The current round of cuts is hitting working class people the hardest because they generally have no alternative – no private health insurance or access to private health care. So they have to make do with reduced services.

Obviously the cuts also mean that health workers may lose their jobs or may have to work harder in a more stressful environment because of reduced staff levels.

As for this 'pause' that the Con-Dem government talks about, the cuts to the mental health sector are not pausing. My trust plans to make a 4% 'saving' each year for three

years. The trust continues to review and cut services as planned previously. The NHS is a big machine to start and stop for brief pauses.

This new programme of giving GPs the money to choose what services they require will not help working class people. GPs already regularly restrict their referrals to specialists to save money. Often it's only when you kick up a stink or when you're in constant agony and can't work that they refer.

I'm sure some GPs might like the power, status and extra perks that the new scheme may bring. But they will have to employ extra staff to administer it all, at a cost. Therefore more money will be spent on admin and less on specialist referrals for patients.

It is not unusual for me to get sent information about my trust's corporate image. Privatisation is already here in the way NHS trusts conduct themselves. Most NHS trust services are more 'competitive' at the mo-

ment as they have the infrastructure – staff, buildings etc. But it cannot be long before, say a big supermarket chain, puts in a more competitive bid because they will probably hire less expensive, less qualified staff on much worse terms and conditions.

We demand:

- Stop the cuts. For a fully funded, publicly owned NHS, free at the point of use.
- 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.



photo Paul Mattsson

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!