



Lewisham Issue 44 (18 July 2014)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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Support Northampton Lab Workers!

NHS workers in Northampton have been locked out just before a strike to defend their terms & conditions. According to Unite the workers face up to £6000 cut in pay. But before they could strike management closed the workplace and refused to let the 78 biomedical scientists work. They've been issued with letters telling them to sign a no strike deal or lose their jobs. So much for partnership working. So much for democracy. NHS managers can be every bit as ruthless as the private sector. But the workers have not given up. Unite are calling for messages of support, and more importantly donations to their strike fund, so they can't be starved into signing the agreements.

Please send messages of support to: Terry the senior rep at terrylodge@aol.com

ently, GSTS now has more work than it can handle and are struggling to recruit. While our workers look at an increasingly insecure future. The fight to resist this market madness is also the fight for patient safety. It makes no sense to lock workers out and ship samples from Northampton to London. Blood samples shouldn't be carried by road. Acutely ill patients need samples taken quickly and safely to a lab on site staffed by experienced scientists. Blood results are a central part of our NHS, we can't safely treat our patients without timely accurate results. Shipping blood, phlegm and urine around the country to low paid, insecure workers only serves the interests of profit. This essential service should be kept in the NHS.

Labour force a vote on privatisation

Labour are backing a Private Members Bill by Eltham MP Clive Efford which aims to remove the compulsion on commissioners to open up the NHS to privatisation. At the moment, a "morass of competition law" compels commissioners to put all parts of the NHS out to competitive tender. Large chunks of the NHS have already been privatised. A £1.2 bn cancer service in Staffordshire has just been put out to tender.

The Efford Bill is a good start but it does not go far enough to address the problems in the NHS. "Commissioning" is an inefficient and bureaucratic way to distribute resources in the NHS. We need a reversal of all privatisation in the NHS including of so-called "ancillary"

services and the abolition of the wonga-style PFI debt. Street mobilisations and pressure through the unions could make the renationalisation of the NHS the key battle ground of the general election.

Market Wreaks Chaos with our Labs

The situation in Northampton is part of a national trend to attack the terms and conditions of lab workers and privatise wherever possible and centralise services. Our neighbours GSTT & KCH have led the way, privatising their lab work in a "joint venture" with SERCO – called GSTS. Many roads lead to GSTS now – including the scab samples from the Northampton lockout.

Many of our lab workers at QEH transferred from the PRUH while both hospitals were still part of SLHT. A lot of this work was 'contracted out' to our Trust. But after the merger, KCH decided to take the work back. Appar-

Solidarity with the July 10 strikers

On July 10 almost over million public sector workers struck over pay. The squeeze on real wages is the worst since records began.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation the cost of maintaining a decent living standard has increased 46% since 2008; wages just 9%. According to the TUC 20% of the British workforce earns less than a living wage.

Workplaces across the country were shut down as workers rediscovered a simple truth – society cannot run without us. Perhaps the best story of the day came from Havering town hall where the few scab managers could not work out how to turn the lights on and had to work in the dark!

The 10 July strike can be the start of an ongoing working-class counter-offensive that challenges the capitalist logic that workers must pay for the financial crisis. Healthworkers should pressure our sluggish union leaders to ballot and allow us to join the movement.

Tory bid to further shackle unions

Low turnout in the public sector strike ballots has led Tories to call for new laws to further shackle the unions. They want to ban strikes in essential public services and any strikes that fail to win over 50% of the entire union voting electorate.

This will make almost all strikes illegal. Staggering hypocrisy from the Tories who won just 23.5% of eligible votes in the 2010 election - votes won on the back of lies such as "no more top-down reorganisations of the NHS".

Smash the anti-union laws

As Tony Blair once boasted the postal vote, the ban on solidarity action and other anti-union laws mean that Britain has the most "restrictive anti-union laws in Western Europe". These laws are designed to make it difficult for workers to challenge the rule of the bosses.

There is nothing particularly democratic about postal votes. Casting a postal vote in the privacy of your own home means you vote without a crucial bit of information - the

mood of the rest of the workforce. The success or failure of the strike will depend on this mood. In pre-Thatcher times workers had some sense of the mood by voting in mass meetings. The decisions made on the picket line and in mass meeting are more democratic than the postal vote. The anti-union laws are designed to curtail democracy in our movement and weaken our struggles. We should rebuild using the old methods of mass meetings and mass pickets to smash through the antiunion laws.

Polish workers fight for union rights

Workers across the world face many similar problems.

In Poland the multinational supermarket chain LIDL is fighting to stop workers building effective unions in its stores. Recently managers sacked leading union reps. A boycott of LIDL stores in Poland was started in February. In the UK LIDL has 600 stores and is expanding rapidly. The company is profitable - profits squeezed out of its workers by ruthless managers.

You can help the Polish union activists by sending a protest email: see: www.labourstartcampaigns.net/

NEW BOOK ON MINERS STRIKE

Class Against Class: the miners' strike 1984-5 edited by Sean Matgamna.

In 246 pages, with photos from John Harris, Class against Class compiles the heroic history of the miners' strike through photos, articles, newspaper headlines and analysis from the socialist press of the time. It offers a rich perspective, and more than being a nostalgic reflection, it critically assesses the battles that were fought so we can learn from them today. Available from www.workersliberty.org for £9.60 incl postage and packaging

LHW provides a forum for staff at the hospital to tell their stories and air their views. If you have a story to tell or an opinion to share then get in touch.

The bulletin is edited by healthcare professionals. All articles are published anonymously and we will ensure confidentiality is upheld. Email: hospitalworkerbulletin@gmail.com