



Lewisham

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Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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NHS bosses' warning

The two years after the next general election will be pivotal for whether the NHS continues to provide free healthcare for all patients. This is the message from the NHS bosses organisation, the NHS Confederation.

The bosses are being very frank. The Tory spending squeeze, which continues to be supported by Labour's Andy Burnham, is putting the future of the NHS at risk. By 2020, the NHS will be short of about £30 billion.

Both Tories and Labour insist that this cut is "necessary". But necessary for what?

Is it "necessary" in the same way it was "necessary" to sell off the profitable part of Royal Mail at a bargain basement price? Is it "necessary" like it was "necessary" to hand over billions of NHS money to Wonga-style PFI loans companies? Is it "necessary" in the same way that it was necessary to give a 5% tax cut to the richest individuals in the country?

This government is only interested in advancing the interests of the super-rich on the backs of the working-class majority. Their NHS cuts are not "necessary".

They are part of a political program to create a for-profit health sector as yet another way to increase the gap between rich and poor.

Unite open meeting on NHS pay

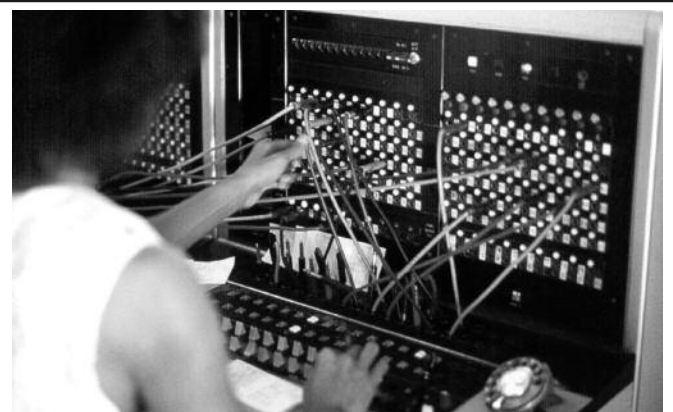
4 November, 5.15pm, Lewis Club

1% pay rise is too much, says government!

Come along to discuss our response.

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



The mysterious QEH

Phones, bleeps and desks all seem elusive in Woolwich. We know the Trust are struggling with the power supply and the plumbing.

Those who venture cross site go off the radar, with little access to telephonic or IT communications when they venture into Queen Elizabeth.

There is a switchboard there, though it is, after all separate from ours. A while before we merged, it had got to a point where we couldn't establish if patients had been admitted there because there was no answer from switchboard — vulnerable adults would simply go missing, GPs and community teams wouldn't know where they were, because other than physically scouring the wards at QEH, there was no way to know who had been admitted.

It's not so bad now, switchboard do answer their phones. Though as often as not the person you're trying to reach has no extension, the infrastructure of the place is hardly in existence let alone functioning. & if that's what it's like for staff, imagine how it must be for patients. It's a wonder that the workers there succeed in looking after anyone in these conditions.

None of this is a criticism of those who are desperately trying to hold things together in QEH.

It is an indictment of the TSA, who was directly responsible up until merger, and the disastrous outcome of the hideously-named "Picture of Health" consultation, which plunged the hospitals that were SLHT into years of chaos.

Nationalise the energy firms!

Ed Miliband's announcement at Labour Party conference that a post-2015 Labour government would freeze energy prices has been met with outrage from energy bosses and the right-wing press.

In the first year of ConDem government, there was a 120% increase in cases of people over 60 being admitted to hospital with hypothermia. These were pensioners who are unable to afford to heat their homes.

Gas and electricity bills for the average household have increased by 68% since 2008 — a leap several times greater than the rate of inflation. Meanwhile, the profits of the “big six” energy companies have increased 74% since 2009.

Critics have said policy would lead to price increases, with companies likely to increase their prices now in anticipation of a freeze post-2015. Three of the “big six” have a deal of offering customers a price freeze until 2016 or 2017.

Digby Jones, the former head of the Confederation of British Industry and a minister in Gordon Brown's government, called the policy “sheer, unbridled socialism”. If only it were. While it will, if implemented, make life better for millions of working-class people, it is more to do with a populist turn from Labour than a consistently left-wing one.

“Sheer, unbridled socialism” would do a great deal more to the energy industry than freeze prices, and a great deal more than the bureaucratic state control that right-wingers fear (almost certainly needlessly) is Miliband's real agenda.

It would take the entire industry into social ownership, ex-

propriating the vast wealth of the energy companies without compensation.

It would use that wealth to ensure free or very cheap energy supply, and set up mechanisms of community planning of energy supply and distribution so that it fulfils social need.

Power plants, and oil refineries like Grangemouth in Scotland where petrochemical company Ineos currently threatens either closure or huge attacks on working conditions, would be taken into democratic workers' control.

Crucially, workers would be given the training and tools necessary to turn ecologically-unsustainable coal and gas-fired power stations into “factories” to produce socially-necessary goods.

The current government's “dash for gas”, a plan to build more gas-fired power stations, would be scrapped and replaced with massive investment in renewable energy sources such as wind and wave power.

The right to energy — light, heat, cooking fuel — is a fundamental one, part of the right to decent housing. As a socially-necessary product, there is no reason why its supply should be controlled by market forces. The way to ensure affordable and equitable energy supply for all is to run the industry democratically under social ownership and workers' control.

That policy would terrify Miliband and the Labour leaders as much as it would the Tories and the energy bosses.

To win such a policy, the labour movement will need to fight independently and impose itself and its interests on society as a governing force.

Strike to save the NHS



Unite's “National Industrial Sector Committee” (NISC) covering health passed the following motion on 17 October:

“This NISC condemns Tory-led attacks on the NHS and Hunt's latest attack on NHS workers. The scale of the attack on the NHS is huge. The NHS is being dismantled and it will be almost impossible to reconstruct it

by the time of the next general election.

“This NISC believes we need industrial action to defend our NHS and our own jobs and pay. We want to take this beyond token protests. Our commitment is to building strike action on a scale that can win. Our intention is to ballot our members to win support for discontinuous industrial action including strike action. We request Executive Council support for this.

“We call on our General Secretary and Executive Council to urgently explore ways of making this a fight for Unite as a whole. This might include levies of our wider membership to support ongoing industrial action e.g. by providing strike pay equivalent to full take home pay. It should involve our community members in campaigning. It should include if at all possible joint action with other unions defending their members (e.g. CWU, FBU, NUT, NASUWT). Ideally we would wish to see Unite's commitment to a general strike made real; there is no better focus than a battle for the NHS.”

This is an important statement of intent. LHW will cover this story more in the next issue...

Demonstrate against NHS privatisation in Brighton, 2nd Nov

Matthew Kershaw is up to his old tricks, this time in Brighton. He's trying to privatise Brighton and Sussex University Hospital. The GMB union has organised a demo against the privatisation, and a delegation from the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign will be going down to support them. More: 07904 944771

US Republicans almost bring down world economy!

Right-wing maniacs in the Republican Party almost brought down the world economy because of their opposition to Obama's extremely mild healthcare reform.

By British standards, Obamacare just another form of private healthcare. The system relies on private health firms and is administered by private health insurance providers. The legislation is mostly designed to break up some of the monopolies that private health firms enjoy in certain states.

Obamacare essentially threatens to put a bit of a dent in the profits of some extremely powerful private health corporations by forcing them to become...er... more capitalist. Yet this was enough of a problem for the Tea Party Republicans that they were almost willing to force the USA into bankruptcy.

If only our union leaders and Labour Party leaders would show such courage and resolve in defending working-class interests!