



Lewisham

Issue 13 (20 March 2013)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • awl@workersliberty.org • 0207 394 8923

Hundreds of thousands mobilise to save the NHS

In the past few weeks hundreds of thousands have mobilised to save the NHS. When the government tried to sneak through their section 75 legislation to privatise the NHS, the 38 degrees website managed to collect 200,000 signatures in a matter of days.

In Leeds over 600,000 people signed a petition to defend their children's heart surgery. Last Saturday, Londoners protested against hospital cuts at the Whittington and in Lewisham.

The Whittington demonstration mobilised 5,000 people against plans to sell off a third of the site, cut beds and slash 570 jobs. Here in Lewisham 500 turned out to the Born in Lewisham event (see box).

Taken together these local mobilisations could be the beginnings of a mass movement. As that mass movement begins to take shape we will be able to envisage an alternative future that puts patients before profits.

BORN TO BE ANGRY!

On Saturday 500 people braved the rain to celebrate Lewisham Hospital's offspring. There was a cheerful crowd all along the street in front of the hospital, who then trampled through the mud in Ladywell Fields to listen to music and speakers. Despite the weather the campaign raised over £1000 on the day.

The campaign started a 'hall of fame' - photos of people born in Lewisham hospital. This draws attention to the thousands of babies born here every year. Many of them need the input of acute maternity services. Or they are born in our beautiful birthing centre handily located just moments away from the labour ward, anaesthetists, obstetricians and theatres should they be needed.

The campaign has got a long list of other varied events to keep up the fight for Lewisham Hospital.

For more details see

www.savelewishamhospital.com

Lobby of Parliament to Stop the Regs! No to Selling Off the NHS! TUESDAY 26th MARCH

12noon – 2pm outside Parliament

2pm – 3pm Committee Room 11

speakers include:

**John McDonnell MP, Heidi Alexander MP,
Lord Phil Hunt, Brain Fisher – Save
Lewisham Hospital Campaign, Debbie
Abrahams MP, Caroline Lucas MP and
Barrie Brown Unite the Union.**

On Tuesday March 26 Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign, along with other NHS Campaigners, will be lobbying Parliament about Section 75 regulations being ushered through the Lords and the Commons without any debate or votes over the next few weeks. These regs are the fine detail of the Health and Social Care Act. They will lead to the selling off of the NHS and are set to make private health companies and their shareholders even richer and all at the expense of NHS staff and patients. Join with us to tell the Government in no uncertain terms we do not want the NHS to be sold off, we not want Section 75 regs!

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 and we will ensure confidentiality is upheld.

Workers Liberty is an organisation fighting in the labour movement for a socialist alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and democracy. We welcome debate and free discussion. Get in touch if you want to know more.



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MEET THE PFI PARASITES

THIS WEEK...JOHN LAING

John Laing Infrastructure Fund is a FTSE 250 company based in tax-haven, Guernsey. They have a 27.5% shareholding in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's PFI debt.

This Monday they announced a 41% increase in their fund value. They specialise in buying up NHS PFI debt and squirreling away our money into their tax haven.

Since their launch in 2010 they have more than doubled their assets and are now valued at £537.4 million. Part of that is cashing in on part of the £2 billion that some corrupt official agreed to pay in exchange for £210 million worth of hospitals in South London Healthcare Trust.

The government tells us there is no money to pay for the NHS. Is it any wonder with parasites like this?

1% PAY RISE = PAY CUT

After a two year pay freeze the government has finally agreed to a 1% pay rise for non-medical staff. Since the pay freeze started bus fares have increased 14%, average fuel bills have increased by 30% and NMC registration has increased by 32%.

By devaluing our pay and conditions the government is turning the NHS into a more "attractive investment opportunity" for the private sector.

AUSTRALIAN NURSES WIN PAY RISE

Members of the Australian Nurses Federation have won a 14% pay increase over 3 years after a work-ban that was escalating into a strike.

The work-ban involved nurses cancelling non-emergency operations and closing down beds. Mark Olson, spokesperson for the Federation, said this pay rise was only achieved because nurses were willing to go through with the industrial action. "I know that this offer would never have arrived without the solidarity, determination and courage of nurses and midwives."

£8.50 TO SEE YOUR GP?

Mike Farrar, head of the NHS Confederation representing all NHS Trusts, made recommendations this week that out-of-hours GPs should charge £8.50 per visit. If implemented it will put added pressure on the A&E departments that the government is desperate to cut. Shockingly, Labour supported the plans. We should demand Labour fights for the NHS and drops its support for cuts and privatisation.



Nurse Karl

With his finger on the pulse of industrial unrest, our bearded band 5 answers your questions...

Dear Nurse Karl,

I was surprised to read that Unison had their AGM last week. I have been a member for many years and I didn't hear anything about it. I can't understand what motivates these people. How can they claim to represent us when less than 20 people came to the meeting?

Regards, Ola

Dear Ola,

Some people say that we get the leaders we deserve. But its more complicated than that. Workers always need representatives to negotiate with management. But trade union leaders often aspire to be accepted as responsible and respected members of bourgeois society and want to substitute pleasant and friendly discussion with management for any kind of conflict.

But below these management-minded bureaucrats, there always arises the pressure of mass demands, the irrepressible needs of the workers which cannot be wished away with fine talk about "partnership working", the aspirations steaming up from the depths of our class, demanding "delivery of the goods".

Some bureaucrats can continue their precarious balancing-act for substantial periods, especially in "normal" times of class quiet. They've got a load of bureaucratic tricks (like minimal advertising for meetings) that can be a strong force in spreading pessimism and apathy. But it can't last forever, events will overtake them and either the bureaucrat is pushed into action from pressure from below or they are replaced by a more militant and representative leaders.

Such a leadership would:

- Keep the membership informed. Knowledge is power!
- Involve all the members – the union isn't a distant organisation or just the local rep but something every worker can be involved in

- Be genuinely democratic – making meetings accessible, frequent and regular. No censorship or proscription on free speech. Members set the agenda. Decisions are passed up the union and officers report back on their progress. We want lively debate not just rubber-stamping the branch secretary's proposals.

- Ensure all officers are elected and accountable and get paid an average workers wage

- Fight militantly to defend our interests.

Such unions are not mere fantasies. They have emerged many times in the past and won many victories. We need such union now. We can make it happen if we organise.

Solidarity, Karl