



Lewisham

Issue 55 (20 May, 2015)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • hospitalworkerbulletin@gmail.com • 0207 394 8923

Tories re-elected: Regroup and Fightback!

The election of a Tory government means more hardship for us, our loved ones and our communities. If they are allowed to implement their plans for the NHS then it is unlikely that the health service will exist in five years time.

They plan further real-terms spending cuts, while more and more money will be siphoned off to big business and bureaucracy. They intend to fund the transformation of the NHS into a 24/7 service by slashing our unsocial hours payments, deepening the crisis of staff shortages.

When we combine their plans for the NHS with their plans for welfare then a picture emerges of a much more brutal world. The welfare state was won by a working-class movement demanding basic social solidarity to civilise capitalism and make it bearable for human existence. The Tories want to reverse and destroy the social safety net. They want to reduce the NHS to a rump service for the poor and create profit-making opportunities for private health corporations.

But the Tories have only 36.9% of the votes cast, almost the same number as in 2010. Most people don't like the Tories. Their parliamentary majority is small. A movement in the streets and in workplaces could push this government back on many fronts, in the same way as the Tories were often on the back foot in 1992-7, despite winning re-election in 1992.

We can either be victims of the Tories onslaught, try to eek out a living as atomised individuals, and observe the carnage as passive spectators. Or we can become active purposeful working-class militants, joining with others to shape the future we want to see.

The lesson for today is don't mourn, don't mope, don't mumble – Organise!

Nursing: the unspoken crisis

Year on year pay cuts, an ever increasing workload and a complete lack of workforce planning by the government has led to a massive nursing crisis.

Here are the facts:

- NICE say £400m is needed to get to safe staffing levels.
- Ninety seven out of 157 acute trusts have more than half of their nurses worried about staffing levels.
- The Centre for Workforce Planning says we will be 190,000 nurses short by next year.
- We are training 13% fewer nurses than we did in 2011
- A third of nurses are at or near retirement age.
- Four out of five Trusts miss their safe staffing targets.
- At a time when we are shifting more care into the community and trying to deal with the needs of an aging population, there is a shortage of district nurses. In 2013 there was a fall of 40% in the number of district nurses. In London only 5 new ones qualified and across the UK only 265. A quarter will retire by 2018.

In parts of Australia and the USA, safe staffing is part of the everyday experience of nurses and patients. This is because nurses have organised in their unions, taken militant action and forced their governments to pass legislation for mandatory minimum staffing levels. Nurses here should join the 4:1 campaign and join the fight for safe staffing. More info search 4 to 1 on www.unitetheunion.org

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

**BOB CARNEGIE SPEAKER TOUR:
FIGHTING BOSSES' UNION BUSTING!
ORGANISING FROM THE GROUND UP!**

Bob Carnegie has been at the heart of every major workers' struggle in Brisbane, Australia, for more than three decades. In August-October 2012 he was asked by workers on the Queensland Children's Hospital to help them in a strike in which all their union representatives had accepted court orders to stay away from the site. Come and hear him speak:

**THURSDAY 21ST MAY, 7PM,
ROOM D103, 25 GORDON ST, LONDON WC1H 0AY**

Public shaming for school boss!

On Thursday 14th May parents, students and teachers witnessed executive headteacher David Shepherd make a fool of himself as he tried to justify the forced academisation of the three Prendergast schools. Shepherd mumbled, bumbled and stumbled as he tried to defend the government's policy. Campaigners may have reason and justice on their side but unfortunately Shepherd holds the power. More direct action will be needed to force him to back down. Get involved: see the Stop Academies in Lewisham Facebook page.

Viennese healthworkers demonstrate at Mayday!

Under the slogan, "Care beaten down: we're standing up!" ["Pflege am Boden - wir stehen auf!"], dozens of health workers from different Vienna hospitals, and solidarity activists, staged a stunt during the traditional Austrian Social Democrats' May Day march. Like many health systems across Europe, the Austrian health sector is being privatised and cut. But healthworkers are beginning to gain confidence and fight back.

More info and photos see www.workersliberty.org

Lewisham and Southwark College Staff Fight On!

UCU members at Lewisham and Southwark College are campaigning for their jobs and the future of further education. Management want to axe up to 200 full-time equivalent posts putting the future of the college at risk. Workers have voted 85% in favour of strike ballots. Workers and campaigners meet every Friday (6:30pm at RHB150, Goldsmiths College) to organise the fightback. Join us!

Fight for Your Rights!

Pumped up on their narrow electoral success, the Tories are proposing attacks on our fundamental rights. As well as scrapping the Human Rights Act (!) they want strike ballots to have a 50% turnout and higher than 40% of members in favour. This will mean national strikes in large public sector workplaces, like the NHS, will be almost impossible. As Tony Blair once boasted to The Sun: "Britain has the most restrictive labour laws in the western world". Yet the Tories are adding further shackles. The anti-union laws severely limit our ability to fight back against our bosses. Prior to the 1980s, union reps could call a meeting, propose a strike and with a simple show of hands workers could walk off the job within hours of management announcing an attack. Solidarity strikes were legal and effective way of spreading and generalising disputes and gave workers real power. The 1982 nurses pay dispute saw many thousands of miners, dockers and factory workers strike in solidarity. Nowadays it takes many weeks to organise a postal ballot and legal strike. The postal ballots are often controlled by unelected full time officials who have no direct interest in organising the strike. And each group of workers fights alone, undermining our most powerful weapon - solidarity. However many votes a government has won they should not be able to scrap our rights - our right to withdraw our labour, our right to state of the art healthcare, our human rights. They will unless we fightback.

Ideas for Freedom 2015: Imagining the Future

"The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their realhappiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo." (Karl Marx)

Ideas for Freedom is the annual weekend of socialist education, discussion and debate hosted by Workers' Liberty. This year we start by taking on religious ideology by debating the Bishop of Manchester on the question "Class struggle or Love Thy Neighbour". The rest of the weekend will be involve visions of and ideas about a post-capitalist, egalitarian, liberated future - and how to fight for it.