



Red Pill

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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The end of the NHS?

The Health and Social Care Act passed through Parliament in March this year. Already thousands of NHS workers have been forced out of their jobs to work for private multinationals like Serco and Virgin Healthcare. So what does this Tory law mean for the future of the NHS and our future as healthworkers?

The most significant part of the Act abolishes the duty on the Secretary of State to provide or arrange provision of comprehensive healthcare, free at the point of need. This law is the basis on which the NHS is built and without it we can expect that fewer and fewer services are offered for free on the NHS.

The power to decide what is offered on the NHS is given to groups of GPs who are organising themselves into Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). These GPs will also control the finances and will benefit from keeping costs low.

The CCGs are now in charge of £60 billion NHS budgets and are buying services from "Any Qualified Provider". This means that NHS hospitals and other community services will have to bid for contracts from these CCGs and compete with the private sector. The government claim that this is putting GPs in control of services. But it is a lie. GPs don't have the time or knowledge to commission services. Overwhelmingly they are outsourcing these responsibilities to private firms who sit on the CCG boards or are providing commissioning support services. In effect, the government has created a massive conflict of interest at the heart of the health service. We won't know if we are getting the treatment we need, or the treatment that is making our doctor the most money.

Where the private sector wins the contract, NHS staff may be transferred to work for them (as has hap-

pened in Suffolk where Serco won contracts for community services). These staff will get to keep their NHS terms and conditions so long as they continue to work for them. But new staff will probably be employed on lower wages and worse terms and conditions. Gradually we will see an erosion of the pay, terms and conditions as more and more of the NHS is privatised – these private companies have to make their profit from somewhere!

As workers, and as future patients of the NHS, we are on the frontline of defending the health service from privatisation. The government is trying to turn back the clock to the time when our access to healthcare was dependent on our ability to pay. We need to build a united grassroots movement to defend the NHS from the private sector vultures in alliance with the communities that we serve. Unison is supporting the Saturday 23rd June Conference to Save the NHS called by Keep our NHS Public and the NHS Support Federation.

For details: www.nhscampaign.org/reclaiming



Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist organisation active in the British labour movement fighting for an alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership, democracy and workers' control. Red Pill is produced by our members who work in the health service. To get involved with producing the bulletin, or to take copies for your workplace, email awl@workersliberty.org with the subject line 'Red Pill'.



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Unions reject pensions deal!

Unions are overwhelmingly rejecting the governments pensions offer. GMB members have voted 96.5% to reject the offer on a turnout just short of 30%. Unison members voted by a slim majority to reject the offer and take "sustained industrial action" on a 15% turnout. Two thirds of RCN members also voted to reject the offer on a turnout of 16%. And Unite continue the campaign with a strike on 10 May. The BMA is balloting as we go to press.

These votes are encouraging but will the union leaders organise the strikes that we need to get a better offer?

Unison and the RCN leaderships are dithering, nervous to call action due to the low turnouts in their ballots. But the low turnouts themselves reflect the failure of either union to take a bold stand and show any leadership in this dispute. Unison is by far the biggest union in the NHS and despite attempts by the leadership to talk up the offer, still 30,000 healthworkers returned ballots saying they are up for "sustained industrial action".

It is now 2 years since the government first started attacking our pensions. In that time the union leaders have failed to show the conviction, courage or ideas to organise effective resistance. The smaller unions must act and shame the bigger unions into organising strikes.

More importantly, we need to start having conversations in our workplaces and union branches. What tactics can we use to hurt the government without hurting our patients? What arrangements are necessary for strike days? What are we prepared to negotiate on and where do we hold the line? **By starting these conversations we can take the dispute into our own hands and build pressure on our leaders to take the action we need to defend our pensions and defend the NHS.**

Workfare in the NHS

So we thought our pay couldn't get any lower? Some NHS employers, like Birmingham and Sandwell Trust, are using unpaid volunteers on "workfare" schemes to carry out patient care duties. Unemployed people should be supported by creating jobs not by getting them to

work for free.

The employers emthusiams for free labour coincides with the government forcing through £5billion 'efficiency savings' in the NHS (read cuts) each year for the next eight years.

We can already see the effects of this in our workplaces with every section of the NHS undergoing cost cutting exercises. Jobs are being lost. People are leaving the service - through voluntary severance, retirement, capability, or disciplinarie - and are not being replaced, upping the workload and stress on everyone else and leaving deteriorating patient care. We need a militant campaign to defend jobs that involves and is controlled by the workers directly effected. **If your bosses are using workfare claimants contact Red Pill - awl@workersliberty.org**

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2012

A weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers' Liberty

Friday 29 June-1 July Highgate Newtown Community Centre, Archway, North London. Tickets: www.workersliberty.org/iff

As the capitalist crisis deepens and a variety of anticapitalist ideas take shape, this year's Ideas for Freedom will focus on understanding what capitalism is and what kind of anticapitalist politics are necessary to fight and overthrow it.

Sessions and speakers will include

- * **How workers can fight and win: speakers from recent winning strikes plus the victorious struggles of the 70s**
- * **How do we make socialism a force again? with author Owen Jones**
- * **Is Greece on the brink of revolution?**
- * **Socialist activists from countries including Ireland, Greece, France and Iran**
- * **Introduction to Marxism sessions: What is capitalism?; Marxists and trade unions; Why is the left so divided; What would socialism be like?**
- * **The NHS we had, the one we have and the one we want**
- * **The English Civil War**
- * **Building a rank-and-file movement in the unions**

