

The Line of March

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**NO TO PRIVATISATION AND THE MARKET MODEL!
SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE OF THE NHS!
HEALTH CARE IS A RIGHT! EDUCATION IS A RIGHT!**

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There Is An Alternative!

All Together in Defence of the Rights of All!

The Coalition government claims that there is no alternative to reducing the deficit by cutting investments in social programmes. Tens upon tens of thousands of people are demonstrating on March 26 to affirm that there is an alternative!

The issue is not simply stimulating the economy by Keynesian-type workfare programmes. There is a reason for the deficit, and it is that society is geared to paying the rich. The rich are asserting their “right” to a priority claim on the wealth produced by working people and the associated service industries. The government sells its “debt” to pay the rich, the Bank of England prints money to pay the rich, even the banks are taken over by the government in order to pay the rich.

Thus the claim of the Coalition that the priority must be to cut social programmes is a fraud. To invest in social programmes is a way of putting more into the economy than is taken out. It is investment in people and their needs. It is the rich who siphon funds out of the public purse and who trample on public right. It is also a fraud for Cameron to say that “we are all in this together”! The sentiment of the workers’ movement is that the vast majority of people are all together for the alternative! All together in defence of the rights of all!

It is the parasitism of the monopolies and the financiers on the body of the social economy that has been exacerbating the economic crisis. Let us unite to block this parasitism, say no to shouldering the burden of economic meltdown, and resolve the crisis in favour of the working class and people! The people will not accept that public services, pensions and benefit payments should be cut, and that the vulnerable be made the scapegoats for the crisis. This is inhuman, and to claim that there is no alternative is also inhuman.

What is human is to affirm that the people’s claims on society must be met as of right. The people have the right to health care, education, pensions, a decent standard of living, and the government must be held to account to guarantee these rights. Who will hold the government to account? The working class, organised as an effective force, a Workers’ Opposition to the Westminster consensus, with its allies in the whole of society. The ethos of this working class movement is that an injury to one is an injury to all. The ethos of the government, and of the infamous “Big Society”, however, is that one’s heart bleeds to see an injury to one as well as to all, but it is not the government’s responsibility, and that one and all must fend for themselves. This simply is not acceptable, cannot be accepted and the people will not tolerate it!

RCPB(ML) calls on everyone to take up this fight for the al-



ternative. We cannot allow the government to hand over funds from the state treasury to the rich and then declare it is necessary to cut back social programmes because of the lack of funds and the need to cut the deficit. We cannot allow the privatisation of public services and then hear the government say it is all because of providing consumers with choice. This is straightforward wrecking activity. Public services and guaranteeing the right of the people to health care and education, far from being in contradiction are both essential in a society worthy of the name of modern and human.

Keep Private Out of Public!

Stop Paying the Rich!

More Funding for Public Services!

Basic Economics and the Privatisation of Public Services

Summary

Private enterprise has three direct claimants on revenue – workers, government and owners of capital. The available revenue is divided amongst the three claimants. The dominant claimant is the owners of capital who exercise a dictatorship over the production and distribution of goods and services.

Public enterprise has two direct claimants on revenue – workers and government. The available revenue is divided amongst the two claimants.

Therein lies a radical difference in the economic structure of the socialised economy that points towards an alternative arrangement in society that consists of only two claimants on the revenue produced by the working class – workers and government – and the elimination of owners of capital as a claimant of revenue within the basic sectors of the economy.

This radical difference also requires a departure from the existing politics and system of governance towards new arrangements where the actual producers, the working class and middle strata, exercise control over the production of use-value and its distribution without the interference and control of owners of capital.

The organisation of public services, how they are delivered, and how the value they create or require is distributed and priced are political issues. Workers and their allies must recognise the political nature of all decisions surrounding economic affairs and become political themselves. Individual workers must be political to defend their rights and basic interests. From individual actions, they must unite with their fellow workers and allies in a collective political movement to defend the rights and interests of all and the general interests of society.

For self-serving reasons, neo-liberals deliberately confuse the economics of privatisation. The Workers' Opposition should be armed with basic economic facts and theory to cut through the fog of disinformation.

Public services and enterprises fall into two broad categories

that often overlap.

1) Public services that are not sold to the public or sold for a nominal fee that is less than the price of production.

These services are delivered free of charge or for a premium or nominal fee. The government gives these public services revenue so they can provide a service.

The regressive anti-social tendency is gradually to increase the price charged for the service and to contract out work to private enterprise. The regressive trend is driven by the capital-centred view that all economic activity must involve owners of capital otherwise the economic activity is of no use to their class interests to become rich and powerful.

The progressive tendency is to provide the service free using

government revenue to pay employees of the state for all work without involving owners of capital, and as much as possible purchase all supplies, plant and machinery from public enterprises.

The progressive trend is driven by the people-centred view that all economic activity must be organised in a social way without the destructive egotistical involvement of owners of capital so that the needs, rights and interests of the people, economy and society can be met.

The most important services of this nature

are public healthcare, public education, the military, governments and infrastructure such as motorways. There are the various benefit programmes for those who become unemployed or need social assistance. All these public services are now under neo-liberal pressure either to be privatised, where not already privatised, or to be discontinued.

2) Public services that are sold to the public either close to or below their price of production.

Revenue for local councils is made up of grants from the government, fees and charges, rates from local businesses and council tax from residents. Council services include the police and fire services, libraries, rubbish collection, sewer systems, city maintenance and so on. There are also the public transport services. Nationally there is Royal Mail, which includes the Post Office and Parcelforce. Of course, many previously nationally



organised enterprises such as electricity and water, national and regional rail, airlines, coal and steel have now been privatised, and many council services have been contracted out. The public services also deliver a disguised form of enterprise profit to owners of capital in the form of cheaper commodities, transport and infrastructure.

Owners of capital, hidden from direct accounting, profit from the added-value created by workers that provide these public services and commodities, including the education of the next generation of workers and maintaining their health. A working class agenda includes the demand that monopolies must return to the economy the benefits they receive from these public services. This cannot be done through privatisation. It can only be done by the government holding monopolies to account and the people forcing governments to uphold public right not monopoly right.

Privatisation of public services does encounter opposition from owners of capital that profit indirectly from them, others that sell commodities to the public enterprises at guaranteed prices or those who own public enterprise debt. The most vocal supporters of privatisation are those owners of capital that want to profit directly from the enterprise profit of a privatised service. To push their narrow interests these particular owners of capital say they will provide “choice” and break the “monopoly” control of government and workers over the service. This line is simply to open the door for another layer of owners of capital to take revenue from the economy.

Public Enterprise and the Available Revenue

A public enterprise providing services or commodities has a certain amount of revenue available to it for the year. This revenue is realised through sale of a commodity or is provided by governments from the public treasury. A public enterprise could be involved in any business within the socialised economy such as postal delivery, producing steel, cars, building homes or improving infrastructure.

For sake of simplicity, let us put aside the amount spent on plant and machinery. Those costs of production must be paid whether an enterprise is public or private. Let us also put aside the accumulated debt of a public or private company. The claim on revenue by owners of debt is similar for both public and private enterprises. The issue of replacing for-profit private financing with public financing of the economy by not-for-profit public financial enterprises is a subject for another discussion. Under the present arrangements, owners of debt such as the big banks receive their debt service charges whether the borrower is a public or private enterprise.

Let us deal with the money necessary to run a public enterprise apart from payments for plant, machinery and debt because those categories apply similarly to a public or private enterprise.



Public Services or Enterprises – Two Main Claimants

Public services or enterprises have two principal claimants on the revenue provided by government or received from selling a produced commodity. Those two claimants are workers and governments. Workers are considered as all those employed in the company. The extravagant salaries of executive managers of public enterprises, their positioning in opposition to the rights and dignity of productive workers, and the corrupt practices of stealing revenue by those in authority are separate issues a Workers' Opposition must address.

Workers' claims on revenue of public services consist of wages, benefits and pensions. Government claims mainly come from individual taxation on the amount claimed by workers (income tax, VAT, user fees).

Governments provide the revenue for those public services that do not generate any or enough of their own revenue to function. Some of this revenue is returned to the government in taxes claimed from the wages, benefits and pensions of workers. It is important to note also that claims of the two principal claimants on the revenue of public services (government and workers plus the recipients of the service) are usually put back into the economy, while claims of owners of capital of privatised services are often taken out of the economy and consumed or invested elsewhere.

Privatised Service or Enterprise – Three Main Claimants

A privatised service or enterprise has three main claimants – workers, government and owners of capital. Owners of capital are the additional claimant on the revenue provided by government or received when a commodity is sold.

If the total revenue available to be claimed remains the same when a service is privatised then the claims of workers and government on the privatised public service have to be reduced to compensate for the additional amount now claimed by owners of capital. A privatised service that does not generate enough or any revenue from sales or user fees still receives some or all of its revenue from government. When a public service becomes a private enterprise dependent solely on sales of a product, revenue comes from individuals buying the product rather than from government. The received revenue is then divided up amongst the three claimants – workers, government and owners of capital. The additional claimant (owners of capital) reduces the revenue available to workers and government. Also, the change in the source of revenue from government to individuals is another regressive trend strengthening class divisions and putting downward pressure on society.

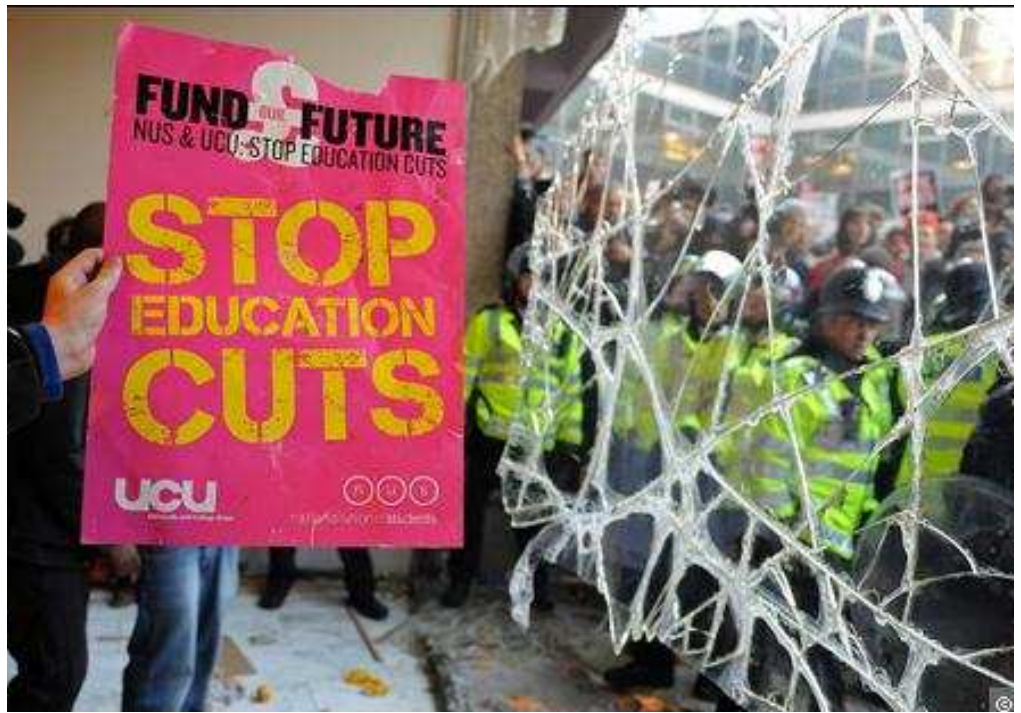
Private Enterprise to Public Enterprise

Changing a privately owned service or enterprise into a public service or public enterprise also changes the distribution of the available revenue. Transforming a private service or enterprise into a public one, eliminates the claim of owners of capital for enterprise profit. The elimination of private enterprise profit increases the amount of revenue available to be claimed by workers and government.

Turning private suppliers, such as pharmaceutical monopolies, into public enterprises is a particular challenge in the health-care, education, infrastructure and other sectors where much of the drain on public revenue comes from private suppliers of necessary plant, machinery and material. To transform the basic sectors of the economy from top to bottom into fully integrated public services is an important aspect of the working class agenda.

Note also that the amount of additional revenue that becomes available when a private service or enterprise is transformed into a public service or enterprise is tempered by the amount government pays to the owners of capital for taking over a service or enterprise. The purchase price must be accounted as a claim on annual revenue until it is fully returned to the public treasury. Once paid in full, the claim of owners of capital from selling their private enterprise to the government disappears from the accounts.

The key aspect to grasp is that workers transforming the bounty of Mother Nature into use-value through modern means of production are the source of all revenue. This revenue is the source for government funding of public services that do not generate their own revenue.



How revenue is distributed within the economy depends on the relations of production and the relative power of the contending social classes. The more public services and public enterprise are extended throughout the basic sectors of the economy, the more revenue is available for the working class and middle strata and for governments to invest in social programmes and better public services.

Divergent Economic Aims

The aim of the owners of capital that seize contracts of privatised public services or take over public enterprises is to increase their claim for revenue as much and as fast as possible. The aim is not to produce or provide a service for the people but to increase their claim on available revenue. This necessarily decreases the amount of revenue that the working class, middle strata and governments can claim.

The aim of the working class and its allies is to mobilise the resources of the country to serve the people and its socialised economy and to fulfil its progressive agenda to humanise the social and natural environment. This agenda when enacted necessarily decreases the amount of revenue that owners of capital can claim.

The aims and claims of the working class and owners of capital are diametrically opposed. This clash of aims and wills is unavoidable in a society divided between two main social classes – the working class and owners of capital.

The progressive trend that serves the working class, middle strata and society generally involves a gradual extension of public services and public enterprises into all the basic sectors of the economy. Pushing this trend forward boosts the economic and political power of the working class and middle strata and advances the cause of public right over monopoly right. This progressive trend does not happen spontaneously but depends on an organised conscious Workers' Opposition holding high its social responsibilities and persisting in moving the economy and society forward to the new.

(Source: K.C. Adams, *The Marxist-Leninist Daily*)

Condemn All Acts of War against Libya! No to Military Intervention, No to the Use of Force!



The UN Security Council resolution presented by Britain, France, the US and Lebanon, passed by a minority vote, is in effect an act of war against the sovereign country of Libya, and is to be vigorously condemned, no matter what legitimacy may be argued on its behalf. Demanding a ceasefire in Libya itself, it establishes a no-fly zone in the country and authorises the use of “all necessary means” by member states “to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory”. The UN resolution also authorises the tightening of economic sanctions and an arms embargo against the Libyan government, and enforces a travel ban against named individuals.

The imposition of a no-fly zone requires an aerial attack on Libya, as well as other measures that are tantamount to a declaration of war. Although it appears to exclude military occupation it does provide Britain and its allies with justification for all other forms of intervention and interference in Libya’s affairs, for ignoring its sovereign rights and for the use of military force. The foreign minister of France hypocritically declared that the UN could not stand by and let “the warmongers flout international legality” but it is the warmongering governments of Britain, France and the US that are manipulating and flouting “international legality” in their own interests. It is this warmongering approach that is completely at odds with a growing sentiment in the world that demands that conflicts both within and between countries should be resolved without recourse to the use of force.

Although the resolution was supported by its sponsors and six other countries, it was opposed by Russia, China, Germany, India and Brazil who all abstained from voting. Russia and China did not exercise their veto but all expressed strong reservations about the vague terms of the resolution, expressed doubts about whether it was designed to achieve its stated objectives and demanded that only peaceful means should be employed to end the conflict. The abstainees stated that they were persuaded not to vote against or veto because of the resolution of the Arab League. The Russian, Brazilian and Indian ambassadors to the UN said that external military action was more likely to lead to further civilian casualties and destabilisation throughout the region. The representatives of the British government, on the other hand, immediately welcomed the resolution as a measure to ensure regime change and to further its stated political aims in Libya.

Once more we see a British government taking the lead in demanding and preparing for armed aggression against a sovereign state in a spirit of bellicose chauvinism. All the Westminster par-

ties have joined in this chorus, despite the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention Yugoslavia, the Malvinas and elsewhere. Ed Miliband who on becoming leader of the Labour Party contritely declared that the party was wrong to go to war against Iraq is now another cheerleader for crimes against peace.

The Coalition government has continued to boast that it was at the forefront of ongoing efforts to plan and launch an attack on Libya and stepped up its efforts as it became clear that the Libyan government had regained control of much of the country. Although the Anglo-Americans and their allies make much of their “duty to protect” civilians their objective remains greater control of Libya’s natural resources and regime change, which became much less likely to take place solely as a result of internal factors. Earlier in the week, the British government summoned the Libyan ambassador and again called for Muammar Qaddafi to step down. It has also made it clear that it would continue to support the opposition, the so-called Transitional National Council in the east of Libya and those it referred to as “legitimate political interlocutors” even though this is a blatant breach of Libya’s sovereignty and interference in its internal affairs. The French government went even further, recognising the opposition as the “legitimate” government of Libya. It is evident that the governments of Britain, France and the US are determined to bring about regime change by one means or another and events are becoming increasingly reminiscent of those that preceded the invasion of Iraq.

Although Britain and the other leading warmongers have made much of the Arab League’s resolution in favour of a no-fly zone, in fact the 22-country organisation, which includes many with strong ties to the major western powers, also voiced its opposition to foreign military intervention in Libya. This opposition was reiterated in a statement by the Syrian foreign minister earlier in the week, who declared that Syria was against any foreign intervention in the region’s affairs and who referred to the “gruesome” experience of previous foreign intervention in Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon and Gaza.

The motives of Anglo-American imperialism and its allies have now been exposed many times and its aims and actions condemned and opposed throughout the world. As was the case with the invasion of Iraq these cannot be masked nor justified by resolutions of the UN Security Council. It is the responsibility of all democratic people to oppose foreign intervention in Libya and to demand an end to the machinations and interference of the Britain and the other big powers throughout the region.

***No to Military Intervention and Aggression against Libya!
No to the Use of Force in the International Arena!
Step Up the Struggle for an Anti-War Government!***

End Britain's Involvement in Military Aggression Against Libya!

- Call of Tyneside Stop the War Coalition -

Oppose the military aerial bombardment on Libya by France, Britain, US and other countries. They are trying to fool the world that this is a legal and humanitarian act to "protect civilians". The resolution they have does not authorise regime change yet this is once again their stated aim and they have started to do this with airstrikes. It was a minority vote at the "Security Council" of UN with 5 countries expressing serious concerns and abstaining within the "Security Council" and many more in the UN opposing this military interference. Interference in a sovereign country in this way is an act of war and has no legality in the UN charter.

The consequences of the intervention in Libya and interference in the civil conflict there will lead to huge disasters for the people of Libya and North Africa. Many hundreds of thousands have been killed in their previous interventions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.



These warmongers have been trying to hoodwink the people into thinking that they are so humanitarian when in fact they care not for the many people who will be killed as a result but they see their chance to satisfy the venal interests of the arms companies, of the Big oil companies in robbing the people of Libya and the people of North Africa of their oil and other precious resources and their freedom and their lives.

Stand against the warmongers Cameron, Hague and the British government who have been in the forefront of calling for intervention in Libya.

Stand against whole pro-war consensus at Westminster, which without even a vote in Parliament are leading the country into further aggression extended now from the Middle East into North Africa and involving Britain in yet more aggressive wars. That we have a new Blair in Cameron shows even more the need to fight for an anti-war government in Britain.

No to the Health and Social Care Bill! Health Care Is a Right! Fight for It!

The Health and Social Care Bill was published on January 19, and received its second reading on Monday, January 31.

It has been described as like "throwing a grenade into the NHS" or thrusting a knife into its heart. The former could be said to be more apt, in that the Bill's purpose is to re-order the NHS as part of re-fashioning the health service in a society in which "austerity measures" for the people are contrasted with paying the rich on a grand scale, and which will lead to chaos as regards people's health care but will benefit the European and US health monopolies.

It is not a Bill to safeguard the NHS but a Bill to further privatise it, and with the model of health care being purchased in the market place and under the banner of "giving patients great choice" runs directly counter to the principle that health care is a right.

This is not "liberating the NHS", as the rhetoric of the White Paper on which the Bill is based proclaimed. Under the guise of "liberation", the government is actually concentrating wide-ranging powers in its own hands regarding the direction of the health

service.

The Health Service Journal had this to say on January 27: "If the bill is passed in its current form Andrew Lansley and future health secretaries will have powers including the ability to direct the economic regulator Monitor and the NHS Commissioning Board and to decide what services should be commissioned by whom. And while Mr Lansley has preserved substantial powers over the Commissioning Board, the board itself has what lawyers called 'draconian' powers over consortia."

The Health Service Journal went on: "The health secretary will be able to step in to the day to day running of the commissioning board if he considers it 'is failing or has failed' to discharge any of its functions. The minister will be able to direct the board to carry out the functions in a manner and a timescale he believes appropriate. If the board does not comply the health secretary can take over the discharge of the functions or make arrangements for someone else to discharge them on his behalf. Clause 59 of the bill gives the health secretary the power to 'direct' the regulator Monitor. Notes with the bill state that this power would be used in 'cases of serious failure by Monitor to

carry out its functions', and argues it is similar to the powers the health secretary already has over the Care Quality Commission. Senior sources said the future role of Monitor as an economic regulator made it inappropriate for the health secretary to have such control and that an arm's length relationship similar to those between government and other economic regulators such as the energy sector's Ofgem were more appropriate models."

The point here is that not only is the government setting the agenda, but it has the powers to dictate how this agenda is carried through. It has been pointed out that the Health Secretary will be acting in a similar fashion to a CEO of one of the vast vertical monopolies. His

powers could include licensing providers (in the purchaser/provider split), policing competition and setting prices (i.e., competition between the "providers" – i.e. the hospitals competing amongst themselves on "price", and against the private health-care "providers"; under the Bill, private providers could be paid 14 per cent more than NHS "competitors").

The Health Service Journal points out that the Department of Health's "foundation trust financing facility would behave like a bank with respect to the £24bn taxpayer investment in foundation trusts and exert control through the use of regulations similar to bank covenants on commercial debt".

Monitor, which is currently the regulator of NHS foundation trusts, will be transformed into the economic regulator of the health service, and for example could push for pensions to be reduced under the terms of the Bill.

These powers put in perspective the high-profile measures of the Bill, which are to give consortia of General Practitioners responsibility for commissioning the majority of health services, and create an independent NHS Commissioning Board. The measures include the abolition of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) and transfer local health improvement functions from PCTs to local authorities. They would also give local authorities responsibilities for co-ordinating the commissioning of local NHS services, social care and health improvement. The Bill would introduce measures to provide for all NHS trusts which are not at present foundation trusts to become such trusts. Under this scenario, the Trusts "compete" and the GP consortia are supposed to do the shopping around. The Trusts would be able to take private patients and make commercial borrowings to finance their activities. Trusts could "fail" or merge.

It beggars belief that such measures are being put forward which so blatantly favour the private sector when the model on which they are based is in such dire economic crisis and the fin-



anciers are basking in government bail-outs. Yet at the same time, the aims of benefiting the health monopolies and slashing public expenditure on the health service stand out in stark relief.

It is clear that if the Conservatives, not to mention the Lib Dems, had put forward their aims for the health service in such stark terms prior to last May's election, then public opinion would have united against them. In fact, they made the opposite promise, which was to maintain the existing structure of the NHS. Even the "Programme for Government" which was the hastily drawn-up basis for the Con-Dem coalition, pledged: "We will stop the top-down reorganisations of the NHS that have got in the way of patient care. We are committed to reducing duplication and the resources spent on administration, and diverting these resources back to front-line care." One has to draw the conclusion that these words were part of the price of coalition. Cameron's gloss on this pledge now is that it is rather a "bottom-up reorganisation". But even this cannot square with the Programme's categorical statement: "The local PCT will act as a champion for patients and commission those residual services that are best undertaken at a wider level, rather than directly by GPs. It will also take responsibility for improving public health for people in their area, working closely with the local authority and other local organisations."

In other words, the government has decided that a form of "shock and awe" reorganisation will best service its needs and to force through its programme of privatisation and cutting funding and investment in the NHS. This is in line with the changes that the government is making throughout society.

This is the significance of the "too far, too fast" complaint about the government's "austerity" measures of its anti-social offensive. The "internal market" of providers and commissioners was introduced by the Conservative government in 1991. However, although Labour in opposition opposed the internal market, after a period of incoherence in its policy after coming to power

in 1997, the New Labour government embraced this purchaser/provider split, and embarked on its own programme of so-called “investment with reform” in 1999 with the whole programme of PFI, and with the Strategic Health Authorities and PCTs emerging in 2002. A whole rhetoric of “efficiency”, “productivity”, “payment by results” and “budget deficits and surpluses” burgeoned. This rhetoric now rules the roost. There is a target of £20 billion in “efficiency savings” to be achieved by 2014, to be achieved under a “Quality, Innovation, Productive and Prevention” (QIPP) programme. In real terms, this will mean cutting tens of thousands of health workers and professionals, axing beds, wards and hospitals, and massively increasing the stress and workload of the remaining staff, against whom the culture of blame will be escalated.

The just demand of the people is that health care be provided at the highest standard as of right. But the government’s Health Bill is set to negate this principle and impose instead a system with a capital-centred thinking and aim. It must not pass! *The Line of March* calls on the working class and people to take up the fight to change the direction of the NHS to one which is based on the principle that health care is a right, and to build a Workers’ Opposition which will put a block on the government’s reorganisation and fight to safeguard the future of the National Health Service.

Whose NHS? Our NHS!

No to Privatisation and the Market Model!

Safeguard the Future of the NHS!

Health Care Is a Right!

Celebrate the Centenary of International Women’s Day!

March 8 this year marked the centenary of International Women’s Day.

The first International Women’s Day was observed on March 19, 1911, and at rallies held in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland more than one million women and men participated on that day. It followed the resolution proposed by German communist leader Clara Zetkin and adopted in 1910 at the international women’s conference in Copenhagen organised by the then revolutionary Second International. It was established as a day which would agitate for the right of women to participate in the political affairs of their countries, in addition to their fight for their rights as workers and as women.

In the following years, International Women’s Day was marked in more and more countries. It was a period when women were fighting for the right to vote, within the whole fight for universal suffrage. As women entered the workplace in increasing numbers, they waged and continue to wage struggles against their conditions of exploitation.

In the years before the start of the First World War, the celebration of International Women’s Day opposed imperialist war and expressed the unity between working women of different countries in opposition to the national chauvinism promoted by the ruling circles. The demonstrations marking International Women’s Day in Russia were themselves an important precursor to the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917.

Women’s leading role in the struggles of today is part of a continuous line of march of women in all the important battles ever since the first International Women’s Day. As in the passing of the resolution to mark that day, communist and socialist women have taken the lead in the struggles of the time, and have continued to chart the line of march towards a new society.

Women’s opposition to the neo-liberal anti-social offensive

is part and parcel of the working class movement which is developing its own independent politics so as to resolve the crisis in a manner favouring the interests of the working class and people, not the rich. Working women take their place as producers of the wealth of society, and as bringing into being of the next generation of society. As such, they have their claims on society’s wealth, and raise their voices in demanding that investment in social programmes be increased, not cut back. They demand that such rights as the right to health care, the care and security for seniors, childcare, education and recreation for children and youth, and all the things human beings require to flourish, be guaranteed by society.

Women are taking up this struggle also as part of the opposition to Cameron’s conception of the “Big Society”, of which they are bearing the brunt. Women are demonstrating that they are also in the forefront of the movement to end crimes against peace and bring into being an anti-war government, and in particular they are taking a stand against armed intervention in Libya, and to prevent even further disasters in the region and world-wide caused by the use of force and aggression.

In celebrating the centenary of International Women’s Day, *The Line of March* celebrates that women are taking political action on an organised basis to fight for their rights, as leaders in the struggles of the working class and as central to developing the Workers’ Opposition to stem the government’s anti-social onslaught. We celebrate women’s struggles over the past 100 years for their emancipation as an integral part of the emancipation of the working class and of all humanity, and of the establishment of a new society.

Celebrate 100 years of women’s leading role in the fight for their rights and for the rights of all!

Hands Off Benefits! No to the Welfare Reform Bill!

The Coalition government, as part of its stepping up of the anti-social offensive against the people and the wrecking of social programmes, has introduced its Welfare Reform Bill.

The Work and Pensions Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, introduced it in the House of Commons on February 16, and Prime Minister David Cameron extolled its virtues in a speech the following day. It had its second reading on March 9.

The Bill is supposed to characterise welfare in the 21st century. Rather it characterises a conception of welfare of the 19th, that the wretched poor and unemployed are to blame for their own plight, not society, combined with a medieval ideology that everyone in this Big Society has the responsibility to fend for themselves, and that vagabonds must be punished.

The major proposal for reform is the introduction of a new “universal credit”, which will replace in and out of work benefits. The Bill also makes provision for a “personal independence payment”, which will replace the existing Disability Living Allowance.

The “universal credit” will be paid to people both in and out of work, replacing working tax credit, child tax credit, council tax benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance and income-related Employment and Support Allowance. The original intention that it should also replace Housing Benefit is said to have been modified.

The aim of the Bill is claimed by the government to be to combat the “benefits-lifestyle culture”. Should not this refer to the lifestyle of the rich, who pocket fabulous sums in bonuses, share options and dividends, and the like, not to mention the dependency of the financial oligarchs on government support, nor to mention their tax-avoidance schemes which are estimated to cost the public treasury some £120 billion per annum?

In fact, this conception of a “benefit-dependency culture” directly negates the right in a modern society of people for food, shelter and clothing as fundamental. If there are problems in society, which there clearly are, then they should be addressed. But the government denies them or says they are out of their hands, and that it is the people who must take shoulder the burden and take up the responsibility for sorting out the problems.

The other prong of the government’s attack is one of cutting social spending and refusing to invest in the economy other than ensuring the rich continue to flourish. The trickle-down effect was discredited with the demise of Margaret Thatcher, but the consequences of adopting this outlook are being felt in the Coalition’s assault on social programmes with a vengeance – “tougher sanctions” for those that fail to appreciate the benefits of this effect. So now it is the claimant who has the “responsibilities” which they will be required to meet. These are the “claimant commitments” which if the person does not abide by they will be sanctioned. For example, “if you’re unemployed and refuse to take either a reasonable job or to do some work in your community in return for your unemployment benefit you will lose your benefits for three months. Do it again, you’ll lose it for 6 months.



Refuse a third time and you’ll lose your unemployment benefits for three years,” as Cameron declares.

Cameron presents this as a “deal”. No such “deal” when it comes to handing public money over to the rich. Even according to Cameron’s own figures, reducing “fraud, error and overpayment costs” would only save the government £1 billion a year. This is presented as “saving the taxpayer” the sums paid to those presently “stuck on welfare”.

This is not a “deal” between those entitled to receive benefits and the government. It is the responsibility of government as the representative of society to meet the claims of individuals and collectives on it. It is an insult to those individuals in need when their rights are not guaranteed, but instead the gap between rich and poor, between north and south, between the workers and the owners of capital are all growing. It is an outrage that IDS should speak of “benefit addiction” and the “sicknote culture”. The rights of the sick and vulnerable must not be trampled on in this fashion. The issue of the necessity to cut the deficit is being presented fraudulently. Stop paying the rich, and then see whether funding for social programmes should be cut or increased! Develop the manufacturing base and a self-reliant economy, and then see whether there is a “benefit addiction” or that working people can find a job with dignity!

Welfare payments cannot be considered a drain or a cost on the economy. Should not the economy be there to serve the people’s needs? The working class and people must reject the “welfare reform” programme as an attack on the honour and dignity of human beings. There is an alternative to this neo-liberal offensive of the government, and that lies in the programme to Stop Paying the Rich, Increase Investments in Social Programmes! The movement to fight for that alternative is growing before our eyes, and a conscious Workers’ Opposition must take up this fight as its key aim.

Hands off Benefits!
No to the Welfare Reform Bill!
Fight for the Alternative!

30th Anniversary of the Irish Hunger Strikes: Long Live the Spirit of Resistance of the Irish People!

Bobby Sands, Irish patriot, died at the age of 27 after a hunger strike lasting 66 days which began on March 1, 1981.

In early 1970s, faced with the growing resistance of the Irish people to the annexation of the Six Counties of the north of Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, the British government introduced internment without trial. During internment, the British government treated prisoners with extreme brutality using five techniques which the European Court of Human Rights subsequently declared "amounted to a practice of inhuman and degrading treatment".

In 1976, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher imposed a policy of criminalisation of the Irish patriots and removed their status as political prisoners, saying, "A crime is a crime is a crime." There followed a five-year struggle to assert their political status, which included the blanket protest and eventually the hunger strike.

The protests occurred at the H-Blocks of Maze prison near Belfast, where the Irish patriots were imprisoned. In all, ten hunger strikers died during 1981, the first of whom was Bobby Sands.

The demands of the Hunger Strikers were not to wear prison uniforms; not to do prison work; to be allowed to associate with other political prisoners, the provision of education and recreation; to receive 1 visitor, 1 letter, and 1 parcel a week; and for the restoration of time taken away from remission of their sentences.

As part of a mass mobilisation of public opinion against Mar-



garet Thatcher, and the murderous policy of British imperialism towards the political prisoners, Bobby Sands was elected on April 9, 1981, as the Member of the Westminster Parliament for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, receiving 30,483 votes. It was as a result of his election that the Westminster Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act 1981 to prevent prisoners from running for election, and in particular to prevent the other hunger strikers and others jailed for political acts from doing so.

On this occasion, *The Line of March* salutes the undying memory of the heroic young men who not only braved the inhuman treatment at the hands of the state, but who gave their lives so that Ireland might be free. The spirit of resistance of the Irish people to assert their sovereignty and for the reunification of their country lives on!

Allied War Crime Prelude to the Cold War - 66th Anniversary of Dresden Fire Bombing

On the night of February 13-14, 1945, the Royal Air Force bomber command carried out two devastating attacks on the German city of Dresden. At the time, Dresden's pre-war population of 640,000 had been swelled by the presence of an estimated 100,000-200,000 refugees. Seven hundred and twenty-two aircraft dropped 1,478 tons of high explosives and

1,181 tons of incendiaries on the city. The resulting firestorm destroyed an area of 13 square miles, including the historic Altstadt Museum. Shortly after noon on February 14, a fleet of 316 US bombers made a third attack, dropping a further 488 tons of high explosives and 294 tons of incendiaries. On February 15, 211 US bombers made a fourth attack, dropping 466 tons of high

explosives.

The fire-bombing of Dresden was considered to be a gratuitous crime on the part of the British which caused up to 300,000 deaths.[1] Dresden was almost completely defenceless against the Anglo-American terror-attacks, which allowed the bombers to descend to lower levels and to maintain a steady height and heading, making their bombs even more effective. Dresden had not previously been bombed during the war. The city was not considered a likely target because it was not a major contributor to the Nazi war economy and no key oil refineries or large armaments plants were located there. In the Ministry of Economic Warfare's 1943 "Bombers' Baedeker", Dresden was ranked 20th of 100 German towns in its importance to the German war effort. In fact, Dresden was best known worldwide as a site of architectural treasures and was sometimes referred to as the "German Florence". Despite this, Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the Dresden raids based on a plan submitted in August 1944 by Sir Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff.[2] Codenamed "Operation Thunderclap", the plan involved concentrating an entire attack on a single big town other than Berlin to try to inflict a single major blow on Germany using all available power. Portal opted for the "area bombing" of a city because cities afforded a big target. In January 1945, Churchill approved Portal's plan, specifically in regards to large cities in eastern Germany, and demanded immediate action. The next day Churchill was told that Dresden, Berlin, and two other cities would be attacked as soon as conditions allowed.

Incendiaries, which are explicitly designed to start fires, were heavily used in the first three Dresden raids. The deadliness of the resulting firestorm was such that even people who took shelter from bombs underground in cellars or subways were either roasted to death by the heat or suffocated because the firestorm sucked the oxygen out of the air. This heavy use of incendiaries underlines once again that the Dresden attacks aimed to terrorise and kill people.[3] Confirming this further is the fact that Churchill specifically ordered that the terror-bombings be focused on Dresden's working class areas. Or, even more blatantly, in the words of Arthur Harris, the commander of the RAF's Bomber Command: "You destroy a factory and they rebuild it. In six weeks they are in operation again. I kill all their workmen and it takes twenty-one years to provide new ones." [4]

The bombing of Dresden was an Anglo-American war crime never brought to trial.[5] A war crime, by definition, is any crime that transgresses the laws of war, and the bombing of civilians has long been banned by international law. The 1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare declared: "Aerial bombardment for the purpose of terrorising the citizen population, of destroying or damaging private property not of military character, or of injuring non-combatants is prohibited." Even the Hitler-appeasing Neville Chamberlain declared in 1938: "It is against international law to bomb civilians as such." In the same year, the League of Nations Assembly unanimously accepted similar principles.[6]

Why was Dresden selected for the February 1945 bombings? Dresden was directly in the path of the advancing Soviet Army, who occupied the city shortly after the raids on their way to Berlin (Dresden was soon to be part of the post-war Soviet Zone). The idea was that the death and devastation caused by

the bombing would be seen and reported back to Stalin, showing him the destructive capabilities of the US and British bomber forces. With the end of the



war only three months away, the aim of the Dresden raids was to try to intimidate Stalin and the Soviet Union so they would not stand up to the Anglo-American imperialists after the war.

About three weeks after Dresden, another similarly coded message was sent to Stalin and the Soviet Union via the US imperialists' firebombing of Tokyo, which incinerated between 80,000 and 200,000 people. In August 1945, the US imperialists sent two new messages, targeting Hiroshima and Nagasaki to showcase the destructive force of their new atomic bomb. Just as Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki had little or nothing to do with the war against the Japanese imperialists, Dresden had little or nothing to do with the war against the Nazis. But it had much, if not everything, to do with a new conflict in which the Nazis and the Japanese imperialists would be Anglo-American allies and the enemy would be the Soviet Union. The Cold War was born amid the ashes of the hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who were murdered in the deadly infernos of Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

(Source: Dougal MacDonald, *The Marxist-Leninist Daily*)

Notes

1. In 2004, a commission of thirteen German historians mysteriously reduced this figure to the current official estimate of 25,000 deaths. This deliberate reduction to downplay the number of deaths parallels the imperialist campaign to reduce the number of deaths attributed to the Nazis, e.g., the number of official deaths at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp was recently reduced from the immediate post-war figure of 4 million, agreed upon at the Nuremberg Trials, to 1.4 million.
2. The most ludicrous theory of the origin of the Dresden raids is that Winston Churchill, the virulent anti-communist who initiated the 21-country invasion of the fledgling Soviet Union in 1918 and who made the Goebbels-inspired Iron Curtain speech in 1948 that officially opened the Cold War, carried out the Dresden raids because Stalin ordered him to! Of course, no documentation of this so-called order exists.
3. Andrew Chandler, "The Church of England and the Obliteration Bombing of Germany in the Second World War". *English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), pp. 920-46 (p. 931).
4. Similarly, the US imperialists used white phosphorus and napalm weapons to terrorise and kill civilians during the Korean and Viet Nam wars.
5. See, for example, Donald Bloxham, "Dresden as a War Crime", in Paul Addison & Jeremy Crang (eds.), *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden, 1945*. Chicago: Ivan Dee (2006).
6. Adam Roberts & Richard Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*. Third Edition. Oxford University Press (2000), p. 22; Geoffrey Best, *War and Law Since 1945*. Oxford University Press (1997), p. 200.

Society Has a Responsibility to the Next Generation

Of central importance to the modern conception of a state is that it be organised to meet the needs of the people. In contradiction, the government, with its sweeping programme of cuts and changes to the existing social arrangements, is intensifying the anti-social offensive and in particular is turning its back on any notion that society has a responsibility to the next generation.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the range of the cuts and changes adds up to an assault on the condition of young people. The tripling of university fees, the Education Bill and other moves in the area of education; the threatened closures of youth centres, leisure centres and libraries; the cutting and reorganisation of benefits – all of these aspects of the government's agenda are disproportionately affecting the youth. Youth unemployment is at a record high (20.5 per cent of 16 to 24-year olds), while untold numbers of young people are carers for parents and other older family members. The youth are bearing much of the brunt of the crisis and the cuts.

Society has a responsibility to the next generation and should be organised to raise and nurture the next generation. This is fundamental to society securing its own future, fundamental to guaranteeing the rights that the youth have by virtue of the fact that they *are* the future of society. The youth should be developed and empowered to be in a position to take control of their future, the future of society, and yet they are being denied this right and further marginalised. When they come out in defence of their rights, they are attacked on horseback while being branded as violent.

Young people are being attacked through cuts, further marginalised, and at the same time, increasingly criminalised. The government is replacing Anti-Social Behaviour Orders with new Criminal Behaviour Orders and Crime Prevention Injunction. As

part of the Education Bill, head teachers will be allowed to stop and search students for and delete data from mobile phones without consent. Youth are being attacked, marginalised and criminalised: this is the three-pronged offensive that the youth are faced with.

Furthermore, claims are being published that social indicators such as health, financial security and even life expectancy are pointing at a future in which the youth of today are faced with the prospect of being the first generation in over a century with a worse outlook on these fronts than their parents had. In other words, whether or not these claims are borne out, society is offering no future at all for the youth.

By abandoning a vision for a bright future, society is offering no future for *itself*. So the issue at heart is the issue of the future of society. What way is society going? This is very much the question that is on the mind of the next generation, because the next generation *is* the future. For society to flourish, the youth need to develop and flourish.

In her speech at the recent anti-cuts demonstration in Manchester, general secretary of the University and College Union, Sally Hunt, said: "This is a government at war with our young people and therefore at war with our future. It is betraying an entire generation." This is a fair reflection of the situation confronting the youth.

The youth and student movement must continue to develop the role of discussion and elaboration based on its own experience and in the context of setting its own agenda. It is this discussion in the course of action that will enable the youth to keep the initiative and to uphold the principle that society has a responsibility to the next generation.



DPRK Delegate on His Country's Stand on Elimination of Nukes

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will as ever make every possible effort to realise the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and promote the nuclear disarmament and the final elimination of nuclear weapons in the world.

The DPRK's delegate said this in a speech at a plenary meeting of the Geneva Disarmament Conference on March 10.

The issue of providing a guarantee for an unconditional non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states presents itself as an urgent one in view of the objective of the nuclear disarmament, he noted, and continued:

It is an escape from reality to pursue only non-proliferation, sidestepping the issue of providing a guarantee for an unconditional non-use of nukes.

The high-handed nuclear policy based on double standards reduces disarmament agreements including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to mere scraps of papers and drives the world into a nuclear arms race at present.

It is unjustifiable for some countries to blame only those countries incurring their displeasure for conducting nuclear activities for peaceful purposes, while evading their commitments to nuclear disarmament.

Using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is not a privilege granted to specified countries only. It is a legitimate right of sovereign states.

The reality proves that the existing commitment to giving a guarantee for non-use and safety of nukes alone can never help solve the problem.

It is our view that it is most urgent, therefore, to set up a mechanism under international law totally banning the threat with nukes and their use.

It is our view that to this end it is necessary to institute an international convention banning the use of nukes which calls for stipulating it as a legal duty of nuclear weapons states to neither threaten with nukes nor use them under any circumstances and

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making a strict verification of its observance.

All the nuclear weapons states should roll back nuclear policies based on pre-emptive use of nukes, unconditionally commit themselves not to use nukes first as demanded by the non-nuclear states and respond to the negotiations for working out the international convention on this issue as early as possible.

We will always sincerely fulfil our duty before the international community as a responsible nuclear weapons state.

(Source: Korean Central News Agency)

1,000 Delegates Elected to Cuban Party Congress

About 1,000 delegates have been elected to participate in the 6th Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), April 16-19, *Granma* newspaper has reported.

Those elections were held during assemblies of municipal and district party secretaries and of party secretaries at equivalent levels in the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Interior Ministry, and included party members living abroad.

Nearly 1,280 pre-candidates for the PCC Central Committee were also approved, comprising a pool from which the final candidates will be selected to be presented to the congress.

Congress delegates and Central Committee pre-candidates were selected as the result of debate and not always by unani-

mous vote, the *Granma* report said.

The main theme of the congress is the Economic and Social Policy Guidelines of the Draft Party Programme.

Organised discussions of the document by the Cuban people in workplace assemblies and in neighbourhood meetings are now coming to a close.

Groups have been designated to meticulously examine all proposals for additions, changes, eliminations, questions and/or concerns, and when their work concludes, a new draft version of the document will be submitted to the party delegates prior to the April meeting, the *Granma* report stated.

(Source: Prensa Latina)



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