

The Line of March

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Fight To Safeguard The Future Of The NHS!



**A Victory for Lewisham is a Victory for Everyone!
For a New Direction for the NHS!
Our Security Lies in Defence of the Rights of All!
Fight For an Anti-War Government!**

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FIGHT TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE OF THE NHS!

Thousands Militantly Demonstrate in Defence of the NHS

As many as 7,000 marched from the South Bank to a militant rally at Downing Street on Saturday, May 18.

The demonstration had been called by an unprecedented coalition of London residents, medical staff, trade unions and health campaigners in London. The local campaigns have been mobilising thousands on the streets in their communities to defend local hospitals against threats of closure and downgrading.



Dr. Louise Irvine

There were big mobilisations from the Lewisham, Ealing, Hammersmith and Whittington NHS campaigns on the demonstration, as well as big contingents from the

trade unions with their banners. Many health workers also joined the march.

Unprecedentedly, a platform was erected opposite Downing Street and the thousands of demonstrators staged a rally with speakers representing health workers, their trade unions, and the local campaigns, as well as a number of MPs who reflect the sentiment of their constituents to fight to safeguard the future of the NHS. The Save Lewisham Hospital campaign banner had been prominent near the front of the march, and Dr Louise Irvine, chair of the campaign, gave the opening and penultimate speeches. Her call was for the militant unity of all to give the movement to defend the NHS and against its privatisation a coherent



national character.

While the speeches took place, a petition was delivered to Number 10 Downing Street.

The demonstration represented a significant stepping stone in demonstrating the sentiment of the working class and people in their fight to change the direction of the NHS. Throughout the demonstration the call was heard time and again:

Whose NHS? Our NHS!



A Victory for Lewisham Is a Victory for Everyone!

The spirit of the campaign to safeguard the future of Lewisham Hospital is that a victory for Lewisham is a victory for everyone.

It is a spirit that the fight is not just a fight to save Lewisham, but that in fighting to save Lewisham hospital health workers and the movement in the community are making a crucial contribution to safeguarding the future of the National Health Service throughout England.

As the campaign sums up the lessons of the struggle and plans further actions, it is coming to the conclusion that the lessons it is drawing contribute to providing coherence to the struggle to safeguard the future of the NHS nationally. It is to provide a programme that unites the broadest forces – health workers, professionals, the community. *Health Care Is a Right!*

The coherence is based on the affirmation that these are *Our Hospitals!* and that it is *Our NHS!* It seeks to bring about the Necessity for a *Change in the Direction of the NHS!*

* * *

Hunt for Hunt

As *The Line of March* goes to press, the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign is spearheading the *Hunt for Hunt!* action on June 15.

Coaches are travelling from London to the Health Secretary's constituency with the aim of taking the movement's message to the doorstep of Jeremy Hunt.

The campaigns from Lewisham and south London, Ealing, Kingston and west London, and the Whittington and north Lon-

don are joining with groups local to Hunt's constituency in Farnham, Surrey, for a day of leafleting, petitioning, demonstrating and informing.

Justice for Lewisham Week, June 29 – July 5

Lewisham People's Commission: Saturday, June 29

With Michael Mansfield QC, Broadway Theatre, Catford

A People's Commission to reveal the truth and present the evidence from witnesses and the facts from investigation on Lewisham and the South London Healthcare Trust. The Trust Special Administrator and government ignored this evidence and presented disinformation in place of information. This People's Commission is of crucial importance.

Save Lewisham Hospital Judicial Review: Tuesday July 2 – Thursday July 4

The Judicial Review hearing is taking place at the High Court in Central London. The Save Lewisham Hospital campaign is challenging Jeremy Hunt's decision to close vital emergency services in Lewisham including A&E, Maternity and Children's departments through this Judicial Review. The campaign's lawyers are working alongside Lewisham Council's teams to cover all legal aspects.

Donate to the legal fund:

The campaign urgently needs to raise £20,000 to fund the fight. Millwall FC has got the ball rolling, they say, with a pledge to match the first £5,000 raised. Please donate:

1. Paypal link on the website: www.savelewishamhospital.com/legalfund
2. Direct bank transfer: Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign Legal Fund, Co-operative Bank plc, Account Number 65646357, Sort Code 08 92 99
3. Cheque payments to: Save Lewisham Hospital, c/o Lewisham Pensioners' Forum, The Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street, London SE13 6LJ

If you wish to volunteer any time to help the campaign, email: savelewishamhospital@yahoo.com



Public Meeting April 25, Goldsmiths University, South London, Save Lewisham Hospital, save our NHS

NHS "Case For Change"

NHs England chief executive Sir David Nicholson announced a major review of NHS strategy in an interview with the Heath Service Journal and in an address to the NHS Confederation conference. Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, also addressed the conference, which is the

NHS employers' organisation representing NHS Trusts and private health companies. Also reported is that NHS England will publish a "case for change" in the coming weeks and then "lead a national discussion with the public" on a three-to-five year NHS service strategy.

David Nicholson, who recently announced his retirement as Chief Executive of NHS England next year, set out in his interview and speech to the confederation that he intended “a new strategy for change”. He said the NHS should “start to build a new organisation and a new system to make change happen in the NHS”. Talking about how he had led the NHS over the last seven years, he said that the strategic direction “just kind of emerges from the political arrangements that we are in” and how that change is then related to the agenda to “make some changes happen” or “batten down the hatches”. Therefore, he said, the NHS “stands at a crossroads in relation to all of this and we cannot allow the tyranny of the electoral cycle stopping us from making the real and fundamental changes that we need to make to the NHS, we cannot allow that to happen this time”.

The argument could not be clearer that this time at the heart of David Nicholson’s new strategy for the NHS is that he and his successor should carry forward the anti-social direction for the NHS regardless of “the tyranny of the electoral cycle”! In other words, it is a strategy of the ruling circles to make the direction set by the successive governments and accelerated by the government’s Health and Social Care Act unchallengeable even by the electorate.

For David Nicholson these statements of “not being stopped” from developing an ongoing “new strategy for change” avoid the fundamental question of what ongoing change he is talking about. In his interview with the Health Service Journal he made some comments aimed at confusing the commentators about the real direction when he said he was “thinking about the possibility of mutual [organisations and] social enterprises, and also about whether the straightforward commissioner-provider split is the right thing for all communities”. It is basic truth that the commissioner-provider split sets a fundamentally wrong direction for the NHS. Yet the direction proposed by Sir David is the same reactionary corporate austerity and anti-social agenda against the public good and the interests of society for a public health care system that meets the needs of all. However, he tries to create illusions that the NHS is still under “NHS” control.

The reality is that even though he claimed in his interview that NHS England is “not a regulator of commissioners” that is exactly what it is. He is Chief Executive of a regulator of purchasers of health care and not the providers of health care. When the Health and Social Care Act 2012 set up the NHS Commissioning Board to regulate Clinical Commissioning groups, from being chief Executive of the National Health Service David Nicholson was demoted to Chief Executive of the NHS Commissioning Board England. The fact that the name was subsequently changed to “NHS England” does not alter that fact. The grenade that the government has thrown into the NHS in the form of consolidating competition and privatisation means that the “strategy for change” in the NHS will be set more and more by the board rooms of private health monopolies and the anarchy of a capitalist market in health.

David Nicholson’s “new strategy for change” is that he wants to lead the NHS even faster down this road. In bemoaning the fact that he will not now take this forward himself but instead hand this direction to a successor he says, “I think I would have had to have committed another five perhaps seven years in the job and genuinely I thought at this particular time



we needed someone who was going to go and see that through and I certainly don’t see myself as a kind of a Margaret Thatcher figure going on and on in relation to all of that.” What is chiefly remarkable about this outburst from David Nicholson is the arrogance of ignoring over the last seven years of his leadership of the NHS, the crisis to which it has been plunged and the refusal to draw the appropriate conclusions of the failure the direction that both the Labour government and the Coalition government have taken. The direction of fragmenting the NHS as a public service into separate underfunded NHS Trusts, of setting up the commissioner-provider split, the continued robbery of the funding for the NHS through imposed “efficiency savings” to NHS organisations and the undermining the GP services, which have all led to failures such as identified by the Francis report, has caused such a disastrous direction for the NHS.

Something has to change. What is needed is not Sir David’s “strategy for change” but the fight for an alternative direction for the NHS not as a “new organisation and a new system to make change happen” but as an organisation and a new system that actually places the right to health care in the first place. That would give the NHS a guaranteed claim on the investments it needs, and end private control of its services including ending the scandalous charges for long-term elderly care, social care and dental care. Such a direction recognises that the agenda of the NHS must be set not by governments and chief executives whose changes are aimed at paying the rich, but by the health workers themselves and by working class and people as part of the fight for the alternative.

The Sensationalisation of So-Called “Gagging Orders”

Along with the imposition of privatisation and “budget constraints”, “efficiency” and the like on the NHS comes the ideological assault to back up the anti-social offensive on the health service.

One of its features is the creation of suspicion through innuendo. This has the aim of trying to undermine the unity of health workers, divide health workers from health professionals, divide the organised workers from health campaigners and so on.

There has for some time been an ideological offensive against health workers seeking to lay the blame for lack of patient care at their feet. It reached fever pitch with the case of the Mid Staffs NHS Trust. And neither has the issue ended, as it is reported that the police are looking into several hundred cases of patient neglect. The fact is, as the Francis Report pointed out amongst other things, that cutting back on staffing levels, and in general the pursuit of financial considerations above clinical considerations, has led directly to the lowering of the standard of patient care. Many have pointed out that with such financial considerations, cutbacks and closures, an increase in the number of deaths has been inevitable. The nursing staff have been put in an impossible situation.

Indeed, the assault is not confined to the health service, but extends to education, to all public services and to society in general. In other words, while these services are put in the service of paying the rich by the government, the offensive comes down from the top of negating the human factor and social consciousness. A bullying atmosphere pervades, where fighting for the rights of individuals, of collectives and for the public good is considered grounds for punitive measures. In fact, in Thatcherite terms, the ideological offensive is built on the premise that there is not only no such thing as society, but no such thing as collectives with common interests. And of course it is individuals who bear the brunt. They are encouraged to think in terms of being isolated individuals, who are in competition with all the other isolated individuals who make up their colleagues. If they do not accept the offensive and attacks on the conditions of work, then so much the worse for them. In other words, far from being valued for showing responsibility in a very difficult environment, working people in health and education are being made scapegoats for the effects of the anti-social offensive.

It is in this context that a furore is being made about an alleged £2m being spent by hospitals on more than 50 “gagging orders” since 2008 which it is alleged ban staff from speaking out. Tory MP Steve Barclay has publicised these figures following a Freedom of Information Act request. Hence, it is alleged, the culture of the NHS has to change. In reality, what lies behind the figures is less sensational, but nevertheless also discloses the

ongoing attacks on health workers.

When there is a contractual dispute and the NHS employer agrees, with the support of the employee’s union for example, to make a payment, then the employer will often ask for a clause where the employee agrees not to pursue the matter legally. Sometimes the union will prepare the agreement together with their solicitors. It is a negotiation that is made between union and the NHS employer in order that the

employee will get the payment they are seeking without a legal process which would be costly to both sides, but particularly damaging for the employee.

In fact, most compromise agreements can still be challenged legally in any case. But the gist of the agreement is not even that in return for compensation, the employee agrees not to speak out about the injustice from the employer. It is rather that the employee agrees not to take the case further. Indeed, the alleged use of “gagging orders” that Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt referred to in March in compromise agreements to the tune of £15m that he wants to ban is very largely a complete fiction.

So not only are the imputations of the sensationalised reports false, but one might ask what else might be in store through the raising of this issue. Is the NHS preparing to ditch such negotiations, for example, or even pursue criminal proceedings against such an employee, especially those that are at present subject to disciplinary hearings, for example? All kinds of skulduggery is being practised in the health and education services to try and victimise the health worker or teacher, for example, in the aim of imposing the dictate of the government’s anti-social offensive throughout society.

However, it is also the case that health workers, teachers and lecturers, are affirming their rights, and getting further organised on the basis that an injury to one is an injury to all. The slogan *All for One and One for All* is coming into its own. The opposition to the neo-liberal agenda from the working class and people is growing, and the watchword is to resist and get further organised!



NHS Further Threatened by EU/US Trade Deal

NHHS services would be exposed to increased private sector competition through a proposed EU/US Free Trade Agreement which is being targeted for signing in 2015.

The agreement is presented as eliminating protectionism, for the good of boosting growth, creating jobs, and so on. It is envisaged that the agreement will remove tariffs between the EU and the US, as well as non-tariff restrictions, for example health, safety and environmental regulations. A key word is “harmonisation”: the bringing together of laws, regulations, standards and other arrangements surrounding raw materials, production and distribution of goods, state-run enterprises and public services, labour relations, competition and related areas into a common, binding framework.

In launching a bill in the House of Lords calling for the “re-instatement of the English NHS”, crossbench peer Lord Owen said that “sources close to the negotiations” over the deal had revealed that it contained “no plan to exclude arrangements for healthcare and protection and in particular for the NHS in its different forms in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland”.

He warned that the deal raised fears of “investment protection being extended to the whole raft of private health contracts in the UK that American health care companies and consultancies expect to be awarded to them in the next few years”, adding that “such protection could have the effect of health contracts

being virtually retained in perpetuity”.

As we have reported previously, in an article for the Socialist Health Association, researcher of international trade Linda Kaucher exposed how, at a civil society meeting in 2010, the EU Trade Commission admitted that the economic crisis would be used to push through the agreement as quickly as possible, that the important preparatory process would be regulatory “harmonisation” and that the first area to be “harmonised” would be health. Such an agreement will not only be a direct attack on public services, but also on standards of public health and safety. According to Food & Water Watch, EU and US officials have already been meeting to discuss meat safety, food labelling, regulations on chemicals in foods, and other “barriers to trade”.

In short, the free trade agreement being planned is about furthering the powers of the global monopolies to plunder the economies on both sides of the Atlantic, through new regulatory arrangements that suit their narrow interests, including the direct and indirect privatisation of social programmes.

The Line of March calls on everyone to take a stand against this and all such “free trade” agreements, which benefit the multinational monopolies. An alternative direction for society, including the NHS, is what is required. The working class and people must affirm that the NHS is their NHS, and the welfare of the people must be placed at the centre of considerations.

The Scandal of Out Of Hours Services

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, as part of the assault on the overall provision of health care, is on the record as denigrating GPs on the question of out-of-hours services.

Dr Laurence Buckman, the chair of the British Medical Association’s GPs committee, in a speech to the BMA’s annual conference on May 23, refuted Hunt’s blaming of GPs for the growing crisis in A&E care.

Dr Buckman rejected the Health Secretary’s call for GPs to resume responsibility for providing out-of-hours care overnight and at weekends in England, as they did until 2004 until 90% chose to no longer do so in a revised contract deal with the then Labour government. He told the conference, “Despite all the evidence, Hunt continues to tweet that it is all the fault of the

GP contract. This is because he does not want to bother with the facts when he can have a bash at those of us who, on his own admission, are overworked and strained beyond endurance. The fact is GPs are undertaking more consultations per patient and we are diagnosing and treating more conditions than ever before. The fact is that GPs cannot become the providers of last resort for urgent out-of-hours services.”

Dr Buckman continued, “While we must play our part in ensuring better continuity of care for our patients, we cannot – and will not – go back to GPs working dangerously long hours or having unrealistic expectations heaped upon us. We need to be freed from the oppression of box ticking and micromanagement.”

He accused Jeremy Hunt of ignoring the evidence, saying, “Hunt has continued to spout this rubbish when on Tuesday, he told MPs that our contract had had a devastating impact and that pressures on A&E services were direct consequences of the disastrous changes.”

Dr Buckman emphasised, “GPs are not prepared to shore up a system that has been rendered unsafe by unwise political meddling. We are happy to work closely with others, including CCGs where there is full GP input, to improve out-of-hours services.”

While diverting attention from the government’s role in the crisis in health care through cut-backs and privatisation by blaming all and sundry including doctors, nurses and managers, the Coalition has also been intent on privatising the out-of-hours service.

For example, Hackney Out of Hours (OoH) service has been provided by the private company Harmoni (now owned by Care UK), under an interim arrangement since 2010. Up until January 2013, the PCT that commissioned Hackney Health services (at the time) NHS NELC, had been preparing to allow Hackney GPs to “opt-back-in” to giving 24/7 care for their patients from April 1, 2013.

The plan was to move the service from Harmoni to the not-for-profit organisation CHUHSE, which the GPs had formed in response to alleged failings in out of hours care for their patients.

In January 2013, the Section 75 Regulations were announced. That same month, CHUHSE were blocked from taking back 24/7 care in Hackney, as planned. Instead, the PCT chose to

extend the existing provider’s contract for a further nine months (later six months as agreed with Harmoni).

In a report published in May, Harmoni had been found by the Care Quality Commission to have been delivering Hackney OoH service without the necessary clinical staff numbers during the time of inspection. “Our judgement: Overall, there were not enough qualified, skilled and experienced staff to meet people’s needs.”

As the Hackney Gazette explained on May 22, the tendering and re-tendering process encourages potential service providers to keep cutting costs, so as to be competitive against rival bids, to the point that it is no longer possible for the winning provider to deliver adequate care.

The conclusion to be drawn is that with the Health and Social Care Act, and specifically Section 75 regulations, fear of litigation is being put before patients’ care. Not only do Hackney residents now have to continue with the OoH service as provided by Harmoni and found wanting by Care Quality Commission, but concerned GPs are seen not to be able step in and help without being forced into a costly bidding process that will only ultimately reduce the amount of funds they have available for patient care, whether they win the bid or not.

The example of Hackney out of hours services demonstrates the direction in which the government is taking NHS. It is certain that similar examples can be given across England. This anti-social direction cannot and will not be accepted!

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

Demonstrating Unity in Action on May Day!

In London, as has become a firm tradition, the annual May Day demonstration took place on Wednesday, May First. In other cities, marches took place on the May Holiday weekend.

The demonstrations were full of banners representing the international unity of the working class, and the spirit was one of demonstrating the unity in action of workers and oppressed people to fight for a change in direction of society, for a genuine alternative where the people are the decision-makers.

Increasing numbers of trade union contingents and their banners made up the demonstrations. This spirit in essence is one that only the working class can save the day, and workers who came together on these demonstrations genuinely greeted one another in this spirit, smashing the neo-liberal mantra that there is no alternative to the



austerity programme imposed by the rich on the working class.



Tyne & Wear May Day March and Rally

On Saturday, May 4, several hundred people took part in the annual May Day March and Rally which started from

Times Square headed by Backworth Colliery Band and passed through the centre of Newcastle to Exhibition Park for the Rally. Speakers included Hank Roberts, President ATL, Kathy Taylor, President UCU, Peter Pinkney President, RMT, Jamshid Ahmadi Assistant General Secretary CODIR as well as a number of speakers from Tyne & Wear, Newcastle Campaign against the bedroom tax, Tyne & Wear Coalition of Resistance, Newcastle Stop the War Coalition and others. Activists of RCPB(ML) took part in the march with the north east banner *Fight for the Alternative!, Stop Paying the Rich! For An Anti-War Government!* and many copies of the party's publication *The Line of March* were sold and distributed from the party bookstall. Copies of the Society for Friendship with Korea (Northern Region) newsletter entitled *Who Wants War, Who Wants Peace!* Were also distributed by members of the association.

South Tyneside May Day Rally Celebration.

On Wednesday, May 1, a May Day Rally and Celebration also took place in South Tyneside. The May Day Chairperson Roger Nettleship with Dr Helen Groom from Keep Our NHS Public, Merv Butler from the South Tyneside Public Services Alliance and Clare Harewood from the Tyne & Wear Coalition of Resistance took up the theme of building the resistance to the attacks on public services, schools and the health service and fighting to safeguard their future. The rally finished with a performance from the singer songwriter Steve Daggett which included extracts



from his Save the City Hall (Newcastle) CD featuring his North East All-stars.

London May Day Celebrations

Thousands turned out for

the May Day march and rally from the historic Clerkenwell Green to Trafalgar Square through the heart of central London. A contingent of RCPB(ML) carried the banner *Fight for the Alternative!, Stop Paying the Rich! Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* and shouted militant slogans en route. Scores of the May Day issue of the monthly publication of RCPB(ML), *The Line of March* were distributed amongst the participants, along the route of the march and in Trafalgar Square itself.

In Trafalgar Square, Martin Gould of SERTUC (South East Regional TUC) and Linda Kietz of GLATUC (Greater London

Association of Trades Union Councils) co-chaired the rally on behalf of the London May Day Organising Committee. The themes of the rally which came through were those of proletarian internationalism and the fight against austerity, for public services and for the alternative. That there was an alternative and the call to unite in action to fight for the alternative was the bedrock of the rally.

Speakers included Christine Blower, the general secretary of the NUT; Paul Nowak, assistant general secretary of the TUC; Damien Pettit of the PCS; disabled trade union activist Sean McGovern; Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite; MP Jeremy Corbyn; Dr Jacky Davis of Keep our NHS Public; a number of speakers from the international communities in London; and rounding off the rally, John McDonnell MP.

Marches, rallies and meetings also took place in Manchester, Chesterfield, Bridgwater, Plymouth, Bristol, Exeter, Swansea, Croydon, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Inverness, Irvine, Glasgow, Nottingham and elsewhere. Other events took place on Monday May 6.

Internationally

Countless international marches, demonstrations and meetings took place on May Day. According to reports, some of the notable events took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, where 55,000 participated; Athens, where a general strike was called; Moscow and across Russia, where as many as 1.5 million took part in the parades; Istanbul, Turkey, where protesters braved riot police water cannons and tear gas after the government placed a ban on demonstrations; across France, where broad sections of the people participated; cities in India, as well as across Asia, particularly in condemnation of the collapse of the Bangladesh clothing factory; Berlin and other places in Germany where May First is a national holiday; Switzerland, Spain and Denmark were among other European countries where protests took place; in Seoul, South Korea, some 7,000 organised workers participated; Cambodia and Taiwan also held demonstrations; in Manila in the Philippines, an estimated 8,000 workers marched; and in Hong Kong, 5,000 marched in support of striking dock workers.

Hundreds marched in Dublin against the government's austerity programme, and the Dublin Council of Trades Unions upheld the slogan: "1913-2013: Unfinished Business". This is a reference to the 1913 Dublin Lockout, a heroic page in the history of the Irish working class.

Across Canada and the US, demonstrations were held.

Hundreds of thousands marched through Havana's Revolution Square in a May Day parade that paid tribute to the late Venezuelan Commandante Hugo Chávez. The event was headed by Cuban President Raúl Castro.

In the DPRK, May Day was marked by workers across the country in their workplaces and institutions, who celebrated together with officials of the government and of the Workers' Party of Korea.

In Latin America, demonstrations were held in Caracas, Venezuela; in Bogotá, Colombia; and in Santiago, Chile, where up to 150,000 marched. Elsewhere, demonstrations were held in Guatemala and Bolivia.

At least 25 demonstrations took place across South Africa under the slogan, "A united working class for a radical economic transformation."

Teachers Rally against Education Policies

The two main teachers' unions, the NUT and the NAS/UWT, held a rally on Tyneside on May 18 against the government's education policies.

They protested at proposed changes to teachers' pay and pensions as well as other educational reforms. NUT General Secretary Christine Blower said that the rally gave an opportunity for the voices of opposition to be raised. She called on Education

Secretary Michael Gove to "stop, listen and reflect".

Several hundred took part in the rally in Newcastle. Parents and school governors also addressed the rally at the Centre for Life. It happened on the same day that Michael Gove's policies were given a vote of no confidence by the National Association of Head Teachers.

135,000 Government Workers Take Strike Action over Cuts

A week of rolling strikes involving 135,000 workers from the two largest government departments began on June 3. The action was in furtherance of the workers' refusal to conciliate with cuts in jobs, conditions and pensions. The strikes formed part of PCS's three-month civil-service-wide campaign.

Jobcentre and benefit office staff from the Department for Work and Pensions joined tax workers from HM Revenue and Customs in a series of regional walkouts. The PCS said that these two departments are at the heart of the debate about public spending. The DWP has cut 20,000 staff since May 2010 and

the government is now threatening to cut even more support for people entitled to benefits. The government has plans to close all 281 of HMRC's walk-in tax advice centres in Britain and divert enquiries to already overloaded jobcentres. Pilot closures of 13 enquiry centres began on June 3.

The union's annual conference agreed to hold a fresh national civil-service-wide strike towards the end of June if the government continues to refuse to negotiate. Dates will be set at a later date and co-ordinated alongside other unions where possible.

129th DURHAM MINERS GALA SATURDAY, JULY 13

The 129th Durham Miners Gala will be held on Saturday, July 13, 2013. It takes place from early morning to early evening, with the march of bands and banners through the Durham streets and the Big Meeting taking place on the Racecourse when all contingents are assembled.

Speakers confirmed this year include:

Frances O'Grady – TUC General Secretary

Bob Crow – RMT

Len McCluskey – UNITE

Owen Jones – Journalist

Kevin McGuire – Journalist

The Durham Miners Gala is celebrated as the biggest and most colourful celebration of the working class and trade union movement. It celebrates the miners' trade union and coal mining heritage. But it has become more than that, much as the struggle of the miners and their spirit continue to inspire. It celebrates the character of the working class as a class, that the working class holds the key to the future. In step with the times, the Durham Miners Gala affirms the necessity for workers to become organised as an effective independent political force in their own right, rising to become a powerful force to change society!

2013-14 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME:

Crude Declaration of Brutal Stepping Up of the Anti-Social Offensive and Austerity Agenda

Strongly tinged with national chauvinism, the Queen's Speech on May 8 began by declaring that the government's legislative programme "will continue to focus on building a stronger economy so that the United Kingdom can compete and succeed in the world". The "first priority is to strengthen Britain's economic competitiveness", via supporting "the growth of the private sector". The government will stick to austerity; it "will continue to prioritise measures that reduce the deficit".

The Queen also announced that the government "will also work to promote a fairer society that rewards people who work hard".

This is code for further attacks on the conditions of the unemployed and underemployed and other vulnerable sections. "My government is committed to building an economy where people who work hard are properly rewarded. It will therefore continue to reform the benefits system, helping people move from welfare to work."

These two aspects set the tone of the whole programme, a programme that continues to unleash the unrelenting all-round offensive on society, attacking the rights of all and enforcing monopoly right, imposing new arrangements affecting the sovereignty of the nations within the British state and opening up the path for further war.

The monopoly media went into overdrive in promoting the most reactionary aspects of the Coalition's third legislative programme within their five-year fixed term, even before the monarch enunciated the words of the ruling elite. Especially repugnant was the assault on the rights of all through focusing on immigration and migrants as constituting a problem for society. What has the government in store in terms of unleashing further assaults on the rights of migrants and minorities, and attempting to stir up trouble? It appears to be intent on creating the conditions for further anarchy and violence



in order to prevent the people finding their bearings and uniting against the anti-social offensive and for the alternative.

The working class and people have demonstrated their profound opposition to the so-called "austerity" agenda of Cameron and Clegg. The Queen's Speech was a declaration in the face of this opposition that this programme of paying the rich and fashioning society even further in every aspect to serve this programme will continue. This is a recipe for intensifying the economic crisis even further, but the Coalition government do not care. It is their aim to ensure the pre-eminence of the parasitism of monopoly capital.

LofM calls on the working class and people to intensify their resistance to the fraudulent austerity programme, not to get diverted, but to strengthen their organisations of defence and resistance. It calls on them to further unite around fighting for the alternative, of increasing investments in social programmes, of putting the rights of all at the centre of considerations, and to change the direction of society from paying the rich to investing for the public good.

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Below we give a summary of some of the key bills of the 2013-14 parliamentary session.

Immigration Bill

The Immigration Bill erodes the rights of national minorities through facilitating deportations, restricting the right of appeal and giving more powers to immigration officers. This bill further entrenches the position of national minorities as second class members of society.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill

This catch-all bill lumps together “anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder, including provision about recovery of possession of dwelling houses; to make provision amending the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 ... the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Extradition Act 2003; to make provision about firearms and about forced marriage”, with an increase in police powers. This furthers the trend of treating the problems and deteriorating conditions faced by the youth, deprived sections of society and national minorities as issues of law and order to be dealt with by crackdown measures and swift justice, as well as connecting this with “terrorism”.

Included in the same bill is a structural change to policing, replacing the Police Negotiating Board with a new Police Remuneration Review Body.

Pensions Bill

The Pensions Bill enforces private and monopoly right by further attacking the right to a livelihood and the claims of retired workers on the added value produced in the economy. The planned increase in the retirement age to 67 will be brought forward by eight years by this bill, as well as introducing a continual review of the retirement age.

Bound to the notion that pensions and other claims of workers on added value are a cost, the bill seeks to reduce the “costs” of pension provision to businesses, making it law for the pensions regulator to make such “cost” minimisation a consideration.

National Insurance Contributions Bill

This bill also starts from the capital-centred position that workers’ claims on added value are a cost. Taking this as a given, it seeks to provide small businesses with an incentive to employ people through a £2,000 allowance to mitigate their “cost”.

Care Bill

This bill entrenches the status of care being an individual rather than a social matter, while dressed up with measures that purport to mitigate the worst effects of this situation, such as

introducing a cap on the cost of care and entitling people to a personal care budget.

At the same time, it attempts to further introduce market forces into the health and social care system by rating hospitals and care homes similarly to the notorious Ofsted rating of schools. Related to this, the bill will provide the chief inspector of hospitals with new powers to intervene.

Two new bodies, Health Education England and a Health Research Authority, will also be set up.

Intellectual Property Bill

Monopoly right over lucrative “intellectual property” will be strengthened with changes to be introduced by this bill to simplify and speed up the patent application process. This is part of implementing the Unified Patent Court, to create patents with EU-wide validity. The bill will also make violation of British patents a criminal offence.

Local Audit and Accountability Bill

This bill will abolish the Audit Commission for local authorities and the National Health Service in England and replace it with a new framework of local auditors. It will also introduce council tax referendums if a council wishes to raise tax above a defined level, using the banner of localism and accountability to divide people on the basis of whether to agree to improved services versus increased tax and spending.

Water Bill and Energy Bill

These two bills are yet another attempt to bolster monopoly right through increasing competition in the utilities industry.

The Water Bill will allow all customers, including those in the public sector, to switch supplier. The intention is for an enlarged and more liberal market, where it is easier for new water companies to enter and compete, as well as collude through easier water trading between suppliers.

The Energy Bill, though dressed in “green” terms, has the same aims, facilitating switching between companies.

Northern Ireland Bill and Wales Bill

Issues of governance, sovereignty and the national question will be stirred by the Northern Ireland and Wales Bills. The former of these constitution-changing bills will prevent members of the Northern Ireland Assembly also being members of the parliaments of Britain or the Irish Republic. Similarly, the latter will prevent MPs in the House of Commons from standing either in Welsh regional lists or in a constituency. It will also fix the terms of the Welsh assembly to five years.

Defence Reform Bill

In accordance with the Strategic Defence Review 2010, this bill seeks to ensure that Britain can maintain its interventionist and war-mongering role in the world, in the present conditions, through an increase in the size of the reserve forces.



CWU picket April 29, Burnley, Protect the People's Post Office



March through Middlesbrough for the alternative, April 27

Unity in Defence of the Rights of All

STATEMENT OF RCPB(ML) ON THE WOOLWICH KILLING, JUNE 1, 2013

The killing of a young off-duty soldier in broad daylight in a crowded street outside Woolwich Barracks in South London on the afternoon of May 21 was undoubtedly a most gruesome incident.

However, the words of David Cameron in response, speaking of “violent extremism and terror” were also horrific. They seem especially so given the subsequent revelations about the contacts of MI5 with the attackers.

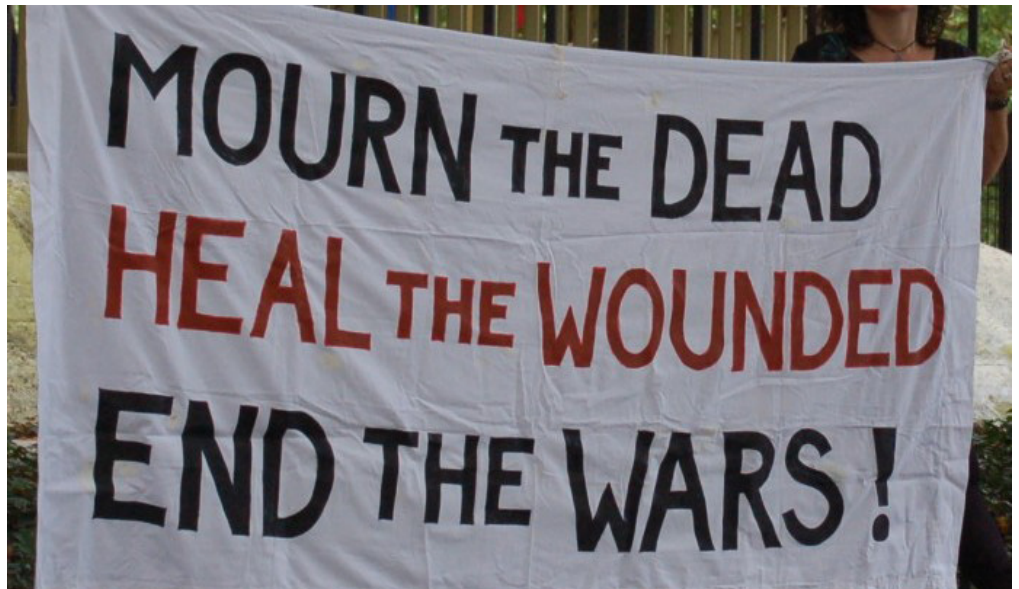
The family of the young soldier and the community in the area of the attack have conducted themselves with dignity in the aftermath of the incident. But it ill becomes the Prime Minister to turn this act into a full-scale terrorist alert and label it an attack on “our British way of life”. It smacks of a premeditated incitement to stir up divisions and hatred, and divert the people from uniting in defence of the rights of all.

The ruling elite has created the conditions for this killing to take place in a number of ways.

Not least, Britain’s governments have carried out wars of aggression and crimes against the peace in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. Such wars have given rise to the desire to settle scores with the ruling class for its crimes, but in addition have fostered among some elements the feeling that there is no way that this can be done but through revengeful killings or acts of violence. These acts themselves play into the hands of the warmongers.

It should be noted there is a deep-seated sense of injustice among the military and their families also to be involved in acts of illegal aggression. There exists a definite sense of betrayal that soldiers are sent into battles which are unjust and in which the enemy is defined only by the occupation of the British armed forces. If a soldier gets killed horrifically in such circumstances, who is responsible? Then when one soldier gets killed in Britain, it is labelled as the most heinous terrorism. The reality is that Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya lie devastated, with hundreds of thousands having died, including several hundred members of Britain’s armed forces, yet the drums of war continue to beat with regard to Mali, Syria, Iran and elsewhere.

The Prime Minister is giving himself the right to decide the definition of “terrorism”. Then he brazenly claims that Britain is working “to make the world safe from terrorism”. The people do not agree with Cameron’s definition of terrorism, nor that Britain is working to make the world or even Britain a safer place.



If there is one thing that Woolwich demonstrates, it is that the government’s actions are in fact threatening the security of the working class and people of the islands of Britain.

The horrific act in Woolwich had been preceded by the ruling circles making a deafening hue and cry about immigrants, about deporting foreign criminals, about threats to the “British way of life”. Such talk is a cover for violating the rights of individuals and collectives while the anti-social offensive is stepped up at home and the clamour for arming “rebels” and “revolutionaries” in order to overthrow foreign governments and incite insurrection is carried out abroad. Is this not support for “terrorism”? And what of the state terror committed by Anglo-US imperialism? In this context, what is the meaning of Cameron’s labelling the Woolwich killing as “terrorist” and “extremist”? And was it not the case that the day after Woolwich, the High Court, in the face of opposition from the Ministry of Defence, was instructing that inquests should be held into 161 alleged unlawful killings by British troops in Iraq?

RCPB(ML) condemns how the killing of Lee Rigby has been utilised as another front for attacking the rights of all, and condemns how “terrorism” is being made the issue. The meaning of Cameron’s “we will not buckle” is that the government will carry on and step up state terrorism, creating the conditions for more acts of violence and anarchy at home and abroad, not less, creating the conditions for more insecurity not less.

It can be said that the violence which consumed Drummer Lee Rigby has its origins in Westminster. The solution for the people is to unite in defence of the rights of all. It is for the people to persist in developing the movements of the people towards their goals as the only solution to put an end to violence, aggression and war.

Government's Continuing Attempts to Justify Crimes of the Past

On June 6, Foreign Secretary William Hague made a statement to Parliament regarding the out of court settlement made by the government in respect of the claims for compensation made by thousands of elderly Kenyans. On behalf of the government, Hague acknowledged that Kenyans were “subject to torture and other forms of ill treatment at the hands of the colonial administration” in the 1950s, and he added that “the British government sincerely regrets that these abuses took place, and that they marred Kenya’s progress towards independence. Torture and ill treatment are abhorrent violations of human dignity, which we unreservedly condemn.” In the course of his statement, Hague announced that some 5,228 claimants would each receive compensation payments of £2,600.

Commentators have been quick to point out that the present government and its predecessors have done everything possible to deny that they had any responsibility for crimes committed during the colonial period or for making any reparation. The case itself has dragged on since 2009 and some of the original claimants have since died. The government still refuses to accept any liability and refuses to acknowledge claims from the descendants of those, now deceased, who were brutally tortured, raped and castrated in the concentration camps established in Kenya in the 1950s. It can be concluded that the government’s conduct in this case is greatly at variance with its hypocritical boast that “the promotion and protection of human rights is at the heart of UK foreign policy”.

Although the weight of evidence and the tenacity of the Kenyan claimants have forced the government to seek a settlement, it cannot be concluded that the judicial system has favoured the case for reparations. Indeed the courts refused to accept that what Hague referred to as “the liabilities of the colonial administration” could be transferred to the present government. In a separate case only last year, the courts refused to even sanction a public hearing into the massacre of twenty-four villages

in Malaya by the British army in 1948. Once again, successive governments have also resolutely opposed an enquiry or reparations for this atrocity.

What was most noticeable about Hague’s statement, however, was any recognition that the imposition of colonial rule and the denial of self-determination constituted crimes that required appropriate reparation. Nor was there any recognition of the heroic struggle against these crimes waged by the people of Kenya. To judge from Hague’s statement, torture and ill-treatment were unfortunate aberrations that just occurred “in difficult and dangerous circumstances”, and he was quick to commend those members of the “colonial services” who “contributed to establishing the institutions that underpin Kenya today”. What emerges therefore is not only a defence of colonial rule but of that unequal relationship that still binds Kenya to Britain today. Indeed according to Hague the ability to recognise the errors of the past and “to build the strongest possible foundation for co-operation and friendship in the future are both hallmarks of our democracy”.

In fact, the continuing colonialist outlook and intervention and refusing to break from the past and make reparation for it exhibit a complete denial of democracy for the majority both in Britain and abroad.

The government continues to promote “our democracy” or “British values” as the justification not only for past crimes but also for its continuing intervention around the world. It poses as the champion of “democracy” but its actions show that it remains the sworn enemy of everything that is just and in the interests of the people, whether in Britain or elsewhere. The government must be condemned for its defence of the indefensible, for its colonialist logic and refusal to make reparation for the crimes of the past, as well as for its continuing interference and the carrying out of new crimes around the world.

First National “Ground the Drones” Demonstration at RAF Waddington



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT:

The Significance of the Workers' Party of Korea in the Advances of the Korean People



On June 19, the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) celebrate the 49th anniversary of the start of work by Kim Jong Il at the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

The date of June 19, 1964, is regarded by the Korean people as of special significance in the development of the WPK. President Kim Il Sung had begun the work to found a new party after signalling the fresh start of the Korean revolution with the formation of the Down with Imperialism Union as a youth. The revolutionary movement grew in struggle against Japanese imperialism. At the time this struggle was crowned with victory, the WPK was founded.

The significance of Kim Jong Il's work with the Central Committee, the WPK points out, is that, as well as carrying out

the start, and that it has to be strengthened on this basis. Kim Jong Il said, "Our Party is a mass-based political party the core of which consists of the vanguard fighters of

the working class and behind which the excellent progressive workers, farmers and working intellectuals are organised." Furthermore, "The working class and its party have no demands and interests other than those of the people, and the mission of the working class party is precisely to defend and meet the demands and interests of the masses."

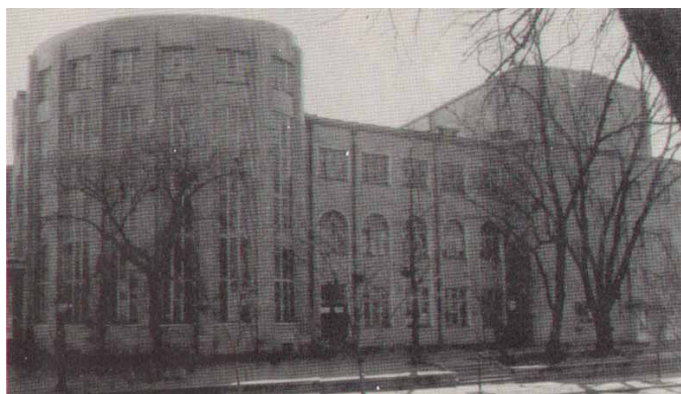
One of the crucial contributions of Kim Jong Il's leadership has been the summing up that if the army is weak, then the country can be deprived of its sovereignty. This is the significance of saying that he made sure that all party work was oriented to the implementation of the Songun revolutionary line.

The legacy of Kim Jong Il is being carried forward by Kim Jong Un, first secretary of the WPK. He is held in high esteem as central to the leadership and unity of the WPK.

This line of march has enabled the WPK to sum up the experience of the Korean people in building a prosperous and peaceful Korea, making great strides in the face of the imperialist embargo. It is certain that under the leadership of the WPK, the Korean people will continue to safeguard their independence and sovereignty.



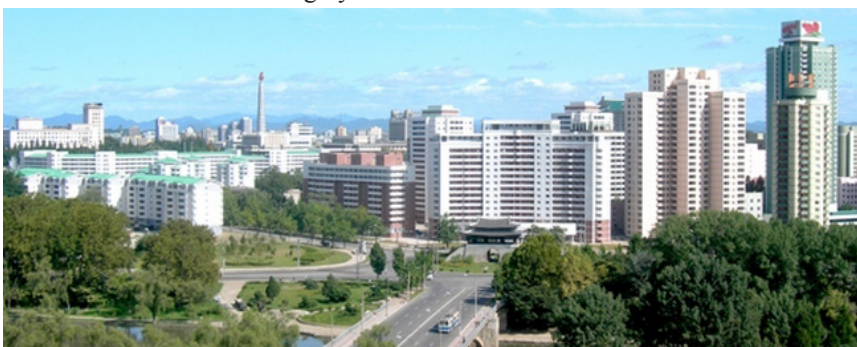
Monument to the Founding of the Workers' Party of Korea



In this building was held the meeting for the merger of the Communist Party of North Korea and the New Democratic Party of Korea into the Workers' Party of Korea

outstanding work in building the party, Kim Jong Il developed it into a Juche-oriented revolutionary party. This has meant that it has led the Korean revolution guided by its concrete conditions and not through a dogmatic rendering of its problems.

Kim Jong Il himself wrote, "Our Party is a new type of revolutionary party of the working class guided by the Juche idea." He stressed that when revolutionary principles are maintained, then "the socialist cause will make progress in the face of any difficulty and ordeal, but that when they are abandoned the socialist cause will deteriorate and collapse". Among these principles is the preservation of the Party's class character, that it was founded as a working class party from





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