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Defend the Rights of All!
For an Anti-War Government!
Fight for the Alternative!

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CRIMES IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY

Condemn the Dangerous Interference of Britain and US/EU Powers in Ukraine!

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN (MARXIST-LENINIST), MARCH 2, 2014

The situation in the Ukraine is becoming hourly more dangerous as the big powers of the United States and the European Union, including not least the British government, and utilising the UN and the Security Council, step up their intervention and destabilisation of that country.

These powers have been behind the myriad of factions which the Western media have described as the "peaceful protesters", but who have actually been committing acts of violence, and have led to the flight of President Viktor Yanukovich. They have fostered and financed the growth of the neo-Nazi organisations, not necessarily to have them in power, but as pawns in their criminal game, and in order to nurture the atmosphere of chaos and violence which has prevailed.

The Ukraine has been brought to the brink of civil war, and the big powers, as is their wont, are now coming out in the open, and are particularly using the occupation of the Crimea by Russian troops as the pretext to intervene more directly. These powers are now brazenly using the slogans of "defence of territorial integrity and sovereignty" in order to ensure that the Ukraine is finally wrested away from alliance with Russia and is subjected to the neo-liberal "solutions" that are being imposed in the European Union and in North America.

The British government is to be condemned for its own participation in the dirty plots of the United States and the European Union against the people of the Ukraine. What right has Foreign Secretary William Hague to fly to Kiev and openly meddle in Ukraine's affairs! Britain has no right to be there, and only shows the extent to which the British government is engaged up to the hilt in inter-imperialist rivalries. As the centenary of World War One approaches, it is a salutary lesson that Britain, Germany, Russia and other players are once more engaged in an extremely dangerous exercise in attempting to redivide Europe and Asia, not to mention Africa and other continents.

The Ukraine appears as a key strategic area for the big imperialist powers. It was a key target in the "colour revolutions", in Ukraine's case the so-called "Orange Revolution" of 2004. The US/EU imperialist powers have sought to strengthen their hold of the European Union of the monopolies and expand this power eastwards in their big power rivalry with Russia and China. They are now seizing their opportunity, meanwhile accusing Russia of being the aggressor.

Ukraine is a large country three times the size of Britain with a population of 46 million. Although formerly known as the bread-basket of the Soviet Union, it is a highly industrialised country, through which crucially Russian gas is exported via a maze of pipelines.

The US, Britain and the EU are now hypocritically confronting Russia and demanding that the people of Ukraine be allowed to decide their own future, precisely what these big powers themselves have ensured has been thwarted. It is a dirty criminal game of geo-politics that these powers are engaged in. The British government is up to this to the hilt and must cease its intervention forthwith. It is this intervention that has created such a dangerous situation and democratic forces in Britain must themselves take a stand in defence of the sovereignty of nations and countries and hold the government to account for its meddling in the sovereign affairs of other countries.

NEVER AGAIN

World War I and the Anti-War Movement

The commemorative events to mark the centenary of the start of World War I, as well as the speeches of various politicians, seek not only to distort the predatory imperialist nature of the conflict, waged by Britain and the other big powers to re-divide the world, but also to hide the that there was sustained opposition to the war and its consequences, not only in Britain but also in many other countries, in which the working class played a leading role.

In the period before 1914, workers in Britain had waged strikes, organised themselves in new ways and taken increasingly militant action in defence of their interests. It was in these circumstances that before the outbreak of war in 1914 the Labour Party, along with the other social democratic parties of Europe, had pledged to oppose an inter-imperialist war between the big powers. It had adhered to the resolution, re-adopted at the Basle Congress of the Second International in 1912, that all such parties "should use every effort to prevent war by all the means which seem to them most appropriate". In the event of war, "it was their duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilise the political and economic crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule".

Speech of John Maclean from the dock at his trial for sedition, May 9, 1918

However, as soon as war was declared the Labour Party and TUC leaders declared "that an immediate effort be made to terminate all existing disputes…and, wherever new points of difficulty arise during the war a serious attempt should be made by all concerned to reach an amicable settlement…" They declared their support for the predatory war, created the conditions for the government to declare strikes and other trade union activities illegal in many industries for the duration of the war, and to introduce the draconian Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), which made active opposition to the war a criminal offence. In 1915, leading members of the Labour Party joined the warmongering coalition government.

Nevertheless, opposition to the war and to its economic effects continued, most famously amongst the workers in the munitions factories in Scotland. As early as 1915, over 10,000 workers in Glasgow took unofficial strike action against the attacks on their living standards. Local shop stewards organised what became the Clyde Worker's Committee, with hundreds of delegates elected directly from the workplace meeting on a weekly basis. Thousands of workers in South Wales also took strike action against repressive government legislation aimed at curtailing their rights, while in 1917 engineering workers throughout Britain went on strike in opposition to government plans for more widespread military service and other anti-worker measures.

Opposition to the war and the government's policy of forced conscription was widespread. There were 16,000 officially declared "conscientious objectors", who refused to join the armed forces on principle and several thousand of them were imprisoned for their stand. DORA gave the government the power to suppress the activities of the anti-war movement and to attack the right to speak and to publish. Several leading anti-war activists, including the Scottish teacher and revolutionary John Maclean, were arrested and imprisoned as a consequence. Opposition to the war and the demand for its termination were greatly strengthened after the revolutionary events in Russia in 1917. At the Leeds Convention of over a thousands delegates from labour, trade union and socialist organisations held in June of that year, there was overwhelming support for an end to war and for establishing workers' and soldiers' councils throughout Britain to usher in an anti-war government.

One of the key features of World War I was that it was waged not in "defence of democracy" or for a "noble cause", but by the rich and their governments to pursue their interests abroad against the interests of the workers of Britain and other countries. The war aims of the rich were in practice supported by those forces which rapidly conciliated with the warmongers on the grounds of defending Britain and its empire against "German militarism" and who thereby betrayed the interests of the workers and the cause of peace. It showed that to safeguard their interests the workers themselves had to organise to be at the forefront of the anti-war movement. In this centenary year, this is a crucial lesson for the working class movement.

Newcastle Stop the War Meeting: *For a Future without War*

On February 27, a public meeting entitled For A Future Without War took place in Newcastle in which around 25 people attended.

The meeting took up the aims of the anti-war movement in the wake of last year's defeat of the government's plan for an unprovoked military intervention on Syria and to stop all Britain's military interventions and wars in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Africa and beyond.

During the speeches and discussion, the central question that was raised was what are the ideas, plans and vision to turn the situation around? The issue arises of turning the Syria vote in the House of Commons into permanent change to stop the interventionist policy of Britain, ending the militarisation of the economy and society. It was also highlighted that the anti-war movement is the main force that unites the people against war and is itself a movement that needs to be taken further into government as an anti-war government.

The meeting also raised the need for Britain to withdraw from NATO and that the dangerous NATO military alliance itself, which is intervening everywhere including now in Ukraine, must be dismantled. Discussion touched on the necessity to do work to oppose the disinformation on World War I and to affirm the lessons and work together to build a future without war.

The speakers were Lindsey German – Convenor of Stop the War Coalition, Clare Williams – Unison Northern Region, and Nick Megoran – Martin Luther King Peace Committee. Roger Nettleship chaired the meeting. The meeting was organised by: Newcastle Stop the War, Unison Northern Region and Newcastle University's Martin Luther King Peace Committee.

THE BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE NHS

There Is An Alternative! Putting the Health Monopolies on Notice

Health workers and community campaigns are continuing to build their resistance to the dictate of the Coalition government and to safeguard the future of the NHS. At the same time, whilst this resistance is also reflected amongst some MPs of all the big parties in parliament, what is not challenged is the assumption that the health economy must continue to be subject to cuts and to the dictate of the financial oligarchy and the monopolies, who demand to be paid over claims of the people under the excuse of "austerity". Public right must prevail over monopoly right. The claims of the health workers and society must be satisfied over the claims of these monopolies.

The government's direction of travel with its Health and Social Care Act 2012 is to further open the NHS up to the private monopolies. This was highlighted in the fact that 70% of all NHS contracts that have been awarded since April 2013 have gone to commercial companies. A report of the NHS Support Federation (NHSSF)[1] points out that in excess of £5 billion worth of contracts to run, or manage, clinically related NHS services have been advertised in the first 9 months since the competition regulations (section 75) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 were passed by Parliament. For example, contracts for small services such as learning disabilities, drugs and alcohol misuse which

have over the recent years been fragmented into bite size chunks are now being steered through the "health market". The government and commissioning authorities are deliberately targeting living standards of health workers to pay for the profits of the health monopolies, regardless of the risks to patients and their services. This also includes many emergency, or urgent healthcare care services, emergency and other ambulance services, the running of urgent care centres and hospital A&E units, the 111 services and almost all GP Out-of-Hours care.

At the same time, the NHS Development Authority[2] risk assessments have published a record number of NHS Trusts that they claim to be "failing". Successive governments have hidden their hands whilst slashing the budgets of these Hospital Trusts through "efficiency savings" which cuts around 4-5% of their budget each year. Unlike government handouts to the rich, these NHS Trusts provide the backbone of life and death secondary care across the NHS and have no other source of income. The National Health Service Support Federation(NHSSF) points out: "This all has the aim so that the private sector is extending beyond the provision of care to include management, planning and commissioning functions. One of the most recent awards gave the country's biggest management consultancies and accountancy firms a share in a £200m pot to offer 'failing' NHS hospitals strategic direction and temporary management. Deloitte, Ernst and Young and McKinsey are amongst those due to benefit." It also has the aim of privatising and closing "failing services" and even whole hospitals through such mechanisms as the Trust Special Administrators appointed by government and through "commissioning".

Alongside this there are the US – EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. The present government supports these negotiations which aim at a convergence of the regulations of the EU and the US, across everything and which have the purpose to open up the NHS to binding "irreversible" contracts from the US global monopolies as well as the EU monopolies.

A report by the National Health Action Party (NHA) points out that the TTIP "goes way beyond previous trade agreements"

opening up the NHS and other public services to these global health monopolies. It includes investor state dispute settlement (ISDS) which will allow these US along with EU monopolies to sue governments directly, for compensation for all profits lost from any government, or local authority action. The reports say that the "disputes are adjudicated by 'arbitration' panels, made up of trade lawyers, judging only on values of 'free trade', taking no account of social, environmental or human rights values.[3]"

According to these reports, trade unions were among 200 organisations who this month wrote to European and US trade negotiators to express their concerns about the plan. Frances O'Grady, General Secretary of the TUC, was reported as saying: "US healthcare companies should know that they have been put on notice. They should not expect the forthcoming EU-US trade deal to protect them from a future British government restoring NHS services currently run by private firms to the public sector."

This stand is within the context of the fight for a change in the direction of the economy and the direction of society as a whole. Public right must prevail over monopoly right. All the talk of debts, losses and inefficiency and "failing " NHS Trusts is to cover over the reality that the level of healthcare spending is being cut by executive decision of the government diverting these funds to pay the huge "interest" payments to the financial oligarchy.

The government must be held responsible for wrecking the NHS, the health economy and the plight of "failing" NHS Trusts. The future of the NHS must be fought for by affirming that health care is a right, and that the people have a right to decide on the future of the NHS. The monopolies must be held to account and their secret "trade agreements" abrogated and the people must demand a public inquiry into the profits that the private sector has made from its involvement in the health service, with the aim of the restitution of the siphoned-off funds to the public treasury. The health monopolies must be put on notice: No to the privatisation of health care! Yes to the public good!

1 NHS Support Federation http://www.nhsforsale.info/privatisation-list/contract-alert/contract-alert-report-apr-dec.html

2 http://www.ntda.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Paper-E-Service-Financial-Performance-30-Nov13.pdf

3 http://nhap.org/privatisation-will-be-irreversible-unless-the-nhs-is-exempted-from-the-eu-us-trade-deal/

Hail International Women's Day!

WOMEN'S AFFIRMATION IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH THE FIGHT OF THE WORKING CLASS FOR A NEW SOCIETY

That women are fighting at the front and centre of the struggles for an alternative is evidence in itself that their affirmation is inseparably connected with challenging the status quo and is in unity with the fight of the working class for a new society.

There is no question that women are in the front ranks of the fight to provide the rights to health care, education, a livelihood with a guarantee. Everywhere they are taking a stand against the dictate of the rich and their representatives which denies the activation of the human factor/social consciousness.

There is also unity with the working class in the measure of their exploitation, the denial and expropriation of the wealth and value which working women create.

The struggles in which women are at the forefront are also raising directly the issue of empowerment, the right to be the decision-makers, to be political representatives of the pro-social and pro-worker trend. This poses the necessity for democratic renewal of the political processes and institutions.

The present society attempts to downgrade women as human beings, to put them in subordination to men, to reduce their participation to women's roles. Around the world, their full participation is denied.

What is required is for women's equality to become a reality. It requires their empowerment, creating the conditions for

exercising their equality as part of the whole movement of the working class and all humanity for its emancipation. In other words, fundamental changes are required in society to transform the aspiration for women's affirmation and equality into the conditions for that affirmation and equality.

Those that are exercising the dictate over society in imposing the anti-social offensive, which is today expressed in the form of the "austerity programme", are mouthing words that they are listening to women, or are concerned about the violence and abuse against women and young girls. Yet these forces stand for escalating the conditions which give rise to all the abuses against women. In fact, women are bearing the brunt of this anti-social offensive.

Women are giving the lie to this propaganda through their very actions in fighting for the rights of the whole society. They are taking a courageous stand against the perspective which is being pushed that the issue is to realise individual women's ambitions to break the "glass ceiling" and take their place as equal partners in the exploitation of society by the big monopolies and the warmongers. Women are taking a crucial stand that *No means No*! not just on the abuse and exploitation of women and women workers, but on all attacks on society and the public good.

The conclusion is that women must create the conditions for them to take their place in all spheres of society, and in practice, against all the odds that the status quo of capitalist exploitation places on them, they are doing so. Alongside all other sections of society, they are fighting for a change in the direction of society, speaking out in favour of the alternative, and an end to class privilege and all other forms of discrimination.

Successful Meeting "NHS in Crisis?" Held in South East London

A public meeting was held on January 30 at Charlton House, South East London, on the present crisis in the NHS. Discussion focused on the threat to NHS services and on the necessity to defend them. Several speakers addressed the meeting, including Jacky Davis (NHS consultant and joint founder of keep our NHS Public), Theresa Pearce (MP for Erith and Thamesmead), Dr Bob Gill (local GP from Welling, Bexley) and Charlotte Monro (trade union activist at the forefront of fighting for rights and services at Whipps Cross Hospital, for which she was dismissed by Barts Health Trust).

Well over 150 people attended this first public meeting since the victory of the legal campaign to strike down the recommendations of the South London Health Care Trust Special Administrator as taken up by Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt. Nevertheless the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), Woolwich, and Lewisham were merged on October 1, 2013, with the dissolving of the South London Healthcare NHS Trust and its component parts being run by different NHS Trusts. The new organisation bringing together the QEH and Lewisham is the Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust. There is therefore a renewed movement amongst the people to deal with this new situation, justly asking what is the precise nature of the victory which the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign won, and how to consolidate the campaign and take it forward to win new and lasting victories. Consequently, as the organisers pointed out, Lewisham and South East London campaigners united to organise the joint meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Iain Wilson, a nurse at the QEH and a Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign activist.

Charlotte Monro pointed out that because of the successes of the Lewisham Campaign, which has relied on its own resources through mobilising the whole community, the merger between Lewisham Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital meant that the renewed joint campaign was in a strong position to bring out the issues involved in fighting to defend the health service. For instance, PFI debts and the demand for "efficiency savings" are issues which are crippling the health service, and therefore it is so important to fight on these issues and for everyone to say, "No, this can't happen!" The renewed campaign can then sum up this struggle and speak with authority, once again serving as a model for the movement to safeguard the future of the NHS. As the Lewisham People's Commission was able to bring out the issues in the Lewisham struggle, so the joint campaign can through acts of conscious participation, guided by the concrete analysis of concrete conditions in the Lewisham and Greenwich Trust, make headway in rolling back the climate of diktat in the whole NHS and contribute to a change in its direction.

Louise Irvine, chair of the "Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign", said that this meeting underlined the need to reach out to all parts of the country in safeguarding the future of the NHS.

The Double-Speak of Jeremy Hunt

The Francis Inquiry report was published one year ago on February 6, 2013, and examined the causes of the failings in care at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust between 2005-2009. The report made 290 recommendations.

Among these were the need for openness, transparency and candour throughout the healthcare system (including a statutory duty of candour), fundamental standards for healthcare providers.

In his remarks to the conference called by Healthcare Conferences UK on the implementation of the recommendations, the Health Secretary said: "The last year has been an absolute nightmare for the NHS.

"Everyone has said to me that although not as bad as Mid Staffs there are pockets of what went on there that they have seen in their own work. But there is a resolve to do something about it – there is a can do spirit in the NHS. The culture is changing and the professional code is being updated so that staff can speak up when things go wrong knowing they will be protected."

This is double-speak by Jeremy Hunt worthy of Joseph Goebbels. The nightmare for the NHS is not one of caring and hard-working staff, but of financial considerations and constraints which have their source firmly in the government's refusal to accept its responsibility to provide health care as of right. Far from health workers being encouraged to speak up with their concerns, there is a climate of diktat in the NHS. Hospital Trust Boards will not accept the right of health workers to set the agenda. The Trust Boards are accepting the government's austerity agenda, and doing everything to implement it. The problems highlighted by the Francis Report will only be solved by increasing investments in the health service, changing its direction and outlawing privatisation. Health workers are doing their duty by organising to safeguard the future of the NHS.

Is the Labour Party NHS Policy a "Coherent and Genuine Alternative"?

In January last year, Andy Burnham, Labour's shadow Secretary for Health, outlined what he called "the first articulation of a coherent and genuine alternative to the current Government's direction" on the NHS.[1] He claimed that "for the first time in 20 years" the Labour Party "has the chance to rethink its health and care policy from first principles". But whilst the starting of Labour's "articulation of the programme" in health posed not a glimmer of a change of direction to that of the present government because of the "unshakeable assumptions" that the imposition of the austerity programme to health will continue, he said he "committed" Labour to repealing the Coalition's Health and Social Care Act, 2012.

Earlier this year we heard Ed Miliband speaking on Labour's NHS programme which confirmed what Andy Burnham had already depicted in the detail. They will keep the most destructive provisions of the Act including the commissioner provider split, the very mechanism by which the coalition government is wrecking and privatising the NHS under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. In other words, Labour's fraudulent claim for a "coherent and genuine alternative" for the NHS can be likened to Aesop's fable that the mountain laboured and brought forward a tiny mouse. A mouse that is not even intended to stop the present momentum and onslaught of the monopolies to privatise the NHS and in fact is more likely to increase it.

Speaking on February 10 at the Hugo Young Lecture, the Labour Party leader Ed Miliband said: "No change could be proposed by a Clinical Commissioning Group (CCGs) without patient representatives being involved in drawing up the plan. Then when change is proposed, it should be an independent body, such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, that is charged with consulting with the local community." Realising that massive opposition to the wrecking of the NHS he proposes to improve "consultation" with patients when he says, "Clinicians, managers and patients across the NHS know the system we have isn't working. We need to find far better ways of hearing the patient voice. So a Labour government will ensure that patients are involved right at the outset: understanding why change might be needed, what the options are and making sure everyone round the table knows what patients care about." Rather than concentrating on the complete lack of any change of direction in Labour's "coherent and genuine alternative", commentators have focused on the differences that have emerged between the position given by the leader of the Labour Party and Andy Burnham, Labour's shadow Secretary for Health. They point out that under Andy Burnham's vision, health and wellbeing boards, which are run by local authorities, would become the "pre-eminent" decision making bodies across the health and social care system while CCGs would merely have an advisory role. Yet Ed Miliband "appears to have indicated that Labour would retain clinical commissioning groups as key decision making bodies in the NHS".[2] Following Miliband's speech, Andy Burnham followed suit with one of his own when he gave the idea of a year of care tariff for hospital care in preference to payment by results, but did not specify whether CCGs or HWBs would be in charge of the allocations for this tariff.

What can be concluded from these comments is that even the shift of focus from commissioning by CCGs to commissioning by partially elected local authority Health and Well Being boards does not seem to be any longer part of Labour's "coherent and genuine alternative". The fact is there is nothing in what Ed Miliband and Andy Burnham are saying that challenges the direction that successive governments, including Labour, are taking with the NHS. Whilst there are noises about NHS being "preferred provider" from Andy Burnham and hospitals having "year long tariffs" instead of "payment by results" there is no challenge to the destructive mechanisms of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and its marketisation of health provision and the consequences of "austerity" and privatisation on the NHS and on the future direction they are taking the NHS. There is no indication of any real intention to repeal the Act. Should Labour come to power, would Ed Miliband contradict his Shadow Secretary for Health again and pronounce even less "change" to the present Act other than a claim to "find far better ways of hearing the patient voice". In other words, no change with the present direction that the Coalition government is taking to impose decisions, i.e. in practice no voice at all. Commissioners will still contract services behind closed doors and secrecy, or in "consultations" that are rarely undertaken now and when they do they only have only one "choice" that the commissioners or providers want.

What is revealed is that the Labour Party is trying to secure votes by creating the illusion that it is standing with the people against the wrecking of the NHS by the Coalition government, whilst its main concern is the interests and support to the financial oligarchy. The Labour Party embodies into their policy on health a policy of responding to the austerity measures by calling at best for not so far, not so deep and not so quickly yet activating no change in the direction on the attack by the health monopolies on the NHS. This is the essence of their anti-social policy. This programme of the Labour Party is not an alternative to safeguard the future of the NHS – in fact it is quite the opposite.

The change of direction needed which the health workers and the workers opposition should fight for is that the NHS is not to be treated as a "cost" on the taxpayer, or to allow the excuse of "austerity" to cut back and privatise in favour of serving the interests of the monopolies. The NHS is not an appendage of the economy, or privilege bestowed by the ruling elite to be

cut back and wrecked in times of "austerity". The health service should be integral to a modern economy that stops paying the rich and upholds public right over the right of the monopolies and the rich. It should be provided as of right to all at the highest level with the wealth created by health workers and that workers in the whole economy produce. Health workers and the working class and people must continue to lay their claims in defending their health services and fight for this new direction by taking this fight with campaigns that unite health workers and communities and bring forward their own best political representatives to fight for a coherent and genuine alternative.

1 *Labour Party's "One Nation" Approach to the NHS Is Not the Alternative* http://www.rcpbml.org.uk/wwie-13/ww13-04.htm#second

2 *Health Service Journal*: http://www.lgcplus.com/news/milibands-ccg-vision-at-odds-with-burnham-plan/5067951.article

No Means No to Clause 119!

On February 27, the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign was instrumental in organising a spirited day of action to oppose Clause 119 (previously 118) of the Care Bill, the "Hospital Closure Clause", with a large crowd from many parts of London and outside taking part.

Clause 119 was tagged onto the Care Bill by the government in autumn after the High Court and then the Court of Appeal ruled that plans to severely downgrade services at Lewisham Hospital, as part of the proposals for dealing with an indebted neighbouring trust, the South London Healthcare Trust, were unlawful. The court ruled the plans were unlawful because the legislation for dealing with trusts in severe financial difficulties – the Unsustainable Provider Regime – does not allow the government or the Trust Special Administrator (TSA) appointed to make recommendations to include neighbouring hospitals that are not in financial difficulties. Clause 119 will change this, making any solvent hospital close to a hospital in financial trouble susceptible to downgrades or even closure with only a cursory consultation process.

The day of action started with a petition of nearly 150,000 signatures being handed in to 10 Downing Street by Dr Louise Irvine, Jos Bell and Barbara Veale from the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign (SLHC) and Dr Wendy Savage, Chair of Keep Our NHS Public. Outside 10 Downing Street, Chair of SLHC Louise Irvine said they were handing in the petition of over 145,000 signatures against Clause 119, "the Closure Clause", which she said is to "to fast track hospital closures throughout the country without regard for people's opinions or the views of local clinicians".

After the handing in of the petition there was a rally at College Green at which many speakers from across London expressed their total opposition to this very damaging clause. The rally was followed by a meeting in parliament. Gynaecologist Professor Wendy Savage said that solidarity is strength and that if people stand up and fight they can win. Dr Kailish Chand spoke of the growing awareness of the dangers facing the NHS. Caroline Molloy, leading campaigner for the NHS and editor of *OurNHS*, spoke of people's increasing concern at the relentless privatisation and deterioration of health services, pointing out that this country had some of the poorest health care services in Europe.

Charlotte Monro said she brought support from the Waltham Forest Saving Our NHS, formed from local Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) and 38 degrees groups. She said that "the campaign against clause 119 is, at heart, about our right as a population to determine what kind of health service we have, and the priorities for our society – and it is about preventing bad decisions with likely disastrous consequences". She went on to explain how in their campaign they went to the CCGs, Trust Boards, Scrutiny Committees, the "fragmented range of bodies in which NHS decision making appears to have been located". The campaign was "asking questions, challenging, getting involved. We are correlating. We are informing and talking with our communities, and we see an important part of our role as supporting our health staff."

Charlotte Monro explained how six years ago they won their campaign to save Whipps Cross hospital as a fully functioning District General Hospital, and asked what would have happened if Clause 119 had then been in place. She then went on to explain how the Barts Trust, the biggest in the country, is also saddled with the largest PFI debts in the country so that £78million has been cut from the health budget together with the culling and downgrading of hundreds of staff leading to the exodus of many experienced committed staff and the impact of that on staff morale.

Charlotte Monro pointed out that health service staff and their unions and professional bodies have a vital role in challenging such proposals and must be fully involved in decision making, continuing, "We know from experience that when staff, unions, community join together they are a powerful force to defend the future of services and to get decisions right. But we are hearing s increasingly across the country of union reps who provide effective challenge and speak out being targeted." She emphasised, "Clause 119 represents a culture of diktat towards NHS and within it, a direction that has to be stopped."

She concluded by saying that a climate of diktat is incompatible with health care, with caring service, with quality of care and safety and has to be changed. Staff must be free and safe to give their views, and their unions to organise staff and provide an independent voice. "We have to make sure they are!"

Hold the Government to Account for the Devastation Caused by the Floods

Last year, extreme weather and high tides started destroying homes on the East Coast. In the following months, there has been extensive and persistent flooding of hundreds of square miles of Britain mainly in Central, South and West England, and in Wales. This extreme weather has left thousands of people and even whole villages and towns almost permanently flooded with some villages cut off and abandoned. Following this there have been days of high hurricane strength winds combined with high tides on the West Coast as far up as Scotland. Several people have died as a result and the misery that this has caused to the well-being of thousands of people and the damage to their homes and to infrastructure and businesses of their towns has been relayed by the media on a daily basis.

The great anger that so many people have being expressing, where people have been left to fend for themselves, either without any help, or with help from over-stretched fire and other emergency services, led to government ministers and the Prime Minister David Cameron touring the areas affected making desperate promises of help. At the same time, often in the midst of all this, these government ministers were squabbling among themselves about who is to blame for the lack of support to the people affected. However, they conveniently overlooked the whole direction that government has taken. The massive cuts to public investment over recent years in infrastructure, environmental services, public services, and its fraudulent programme of "small government" and "big society" has all contributed to a direction which is unable to plan for the present, or the future of the environmental infrastructure of Britain. It is unable to protect the well-being of people's homes and small businesses.

In addition, actions that the government has taken have added to the devastation that the extreme weather has caused. Deforestation and wrecking of the landscape, including marsh lands, has contributed to soil erosion. The Coalition government also removed restrictions on the planting of maize, giving a specific exemption for maize cultivation from all soil conservation measures. The issues has been one of not cultivating the land for need, but for maximum profit with no regard for Mother Earth or the people dependent on her.

In fact, the whole direction that government has taken society and the economy is one of just serving the interests of the monopolies for maximum profit using the Treasury to fund the infrastructure that serves their interests. In this respect, the government's latest National Infrastructure Plan 2013 published in December claims it is addressing the issue of historic underinvestment by saying it "is taking action to ensure that the UK has the infrastructure it will need to be successful in the global race". In this plan, they admit that "flooding will continue to be a significant risk for some UK households as sea levels continue to rise. Approximately 5 million properties are exposed to at least some level of flood risk. Severe flooding can cause immense amounts of damage to both the economy and people's lives – the floods of 2007 are estimated to have cost around £3 billion." They also noted "an independent assessment that the number of properties facing significant risk of flooding could rise from 560,000 to between 770,000 and 1.3 million by 2050". Yet in the face of this evidence the government does not see this as a priority in the "global race" to serve the monopolies: their spending in the 2013 plan is approximately £1.5 billion – half of the cost of the £3 billion clear-up in 2007. Yet, in 2013, the overall infrastructure investment "value of the pipeline has increased from over £309 billion to over £375 billion of investment. Most of the value of the pipeline is in the energy and transport sectors, worth over £340 billion of combined investment."

The government's National Infrastructure Plan started in 2010 is not "planning for the future" as it claims but a plan to produce infrastructure in favour of the monopolies and their maximum profits. It also has the aim to sell Britain's infrastructure to these global monopolies lock stock and barrel. The 2013 report boasts of the sell-off of the Post Office "with the privatisation of Royal Mail and sale of shares in Lloyds Banking Group, central government has delivered sales of over £11 billion since May 2010". It also itemises in the "government assets sale" that the sale of "corporate and financial assets will be increased from £10 billion to £20 billion between 2014 and 2020". This includes £12 billion for privatisation of student loans, property assets and the government's shareholding in Eurostar, the Green bank and so on. At the same time, the report points out that since May 2010, there has been around £15 billion of inward investment in infrastructure such as power stations, ports, airports, water reservoirs, to foreign monopolies. They congratulate themselves on attracting foreign monopolies because of a "stable risk and return profile, clear property rights for investors, world-class regulation,

transparent policy development, strong financial markets".The government is speeding ahead with its plan to place the infrastructure of the country directly in the hands of the monopolies and financial oligarchy and ensuring that it more and more directly serves their interests in spite of the pending disasters to the country caused by this direction. These extreme weather events have further exposed in a most tragic way this anti-human direction in the infrastructure of the country. All kinds of excuses are being made by the government and an obedient media to claim that flood defences can no longer be afforded, that climate change means that whole areas of the country and the people who live there should abandoned to climate change and rising seas. This is the criminal logic of the ruling circles who in their drive for maximum profit cannot determine the outcome of their own disastrous actions for society as a whole. David Cameron has the facts and knows now what he is doing. In his panic, he tries to claim that "money is no object", but as with vital public services there is no new investment from his government. He only has eyes to serve the interests of the monopolies. It is ironic that such a failing state as Britain can send thousands of troops to carry out invasions and occupations of other countries in the name of "making Britain great again" but has been unable to mobilise soldiers in any effective way to carry out flood relief work in Britain.

What is required is holding the government to account and prioritising a national infrastructure plan that places the well-being of the population and their environment in the first place. It is ever more clear as these events unfold that this task falls to the people themselves, to their resistance and to building their workers' opposition. The workers' opposition fights to transform the society and economy in the direction that puts human beings at the centre of all decisions and curbs these monopolies before they are allowed to submerge the whole of society under the floodwaters of their disastrous capital-centred system.

FOR A MODERN SOVEREIGN SCOTLAND

Establishment Forces Unite Against Scottish Independence

February saw the campaign over Scottish independence hotting up. A conspicuous feature of the lead-up to the September referendum is how a concerted effort is being made from all quarters to ensure a defeat for the "Yes" campaign. The three big parties stand together as one over the issue, while both the EU and US are making interventions in an attempt to bolster the "No" campaign.

The past month has seen this particularly over the issue of the currency that would be used by an independent Scotland, the present proposal by the Scottish government being for a Sterling zone. In a speech on February 13, Chancellor George Osborne declared that "if Scotland walks away from the UK, it walks away from the pound," which Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond rejected as "bluff, bluster and posturing". This follows comments by governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney in January aimed at undermining the Scottish government's case for a currency union. The big credit rating agencies are now also beginning to weigh in on the financial debate.

The establishment forces, not just in Britain but also from outside, are starting to bring out their heavy artillery. They know that unless they win this battle convincingly, they may yet lose the war. Their aim is for a crushing defeat for independence in the referendum, followed by a collapse in support for the SNP. However, though the "No" vote has a clear lead in the polls, it is hardly decisive. Indeed, the polls are beginning to show some signs of a shift in opinion, particularly since the tactlessly belligerent stand of the British government over the currency zone. A Survation poll in the Scottish Daily Mail on February 17-18 in the wake of George Osborne's speech found support for independence increase from 32% in January to 38%, while the opposing side fell from 52% down to 47%.

Further, the very fact that the referendum is taking place, quite apart from the final outcome, is opening up long-standing issues of sovereignty, the national question and the constitution that the establishment élite would prefer to continue to be left unsaid. The implicit challenge to the Westminster system, the so-called mother of all parliaments, has the potential to send a shockwave through the Anglo-American world, the European Union and beyond.

The anachronistic United Kingdom is an integral part of the imperialist system of states. Its colonial past to which it still clings facilitates the monopolies in plundering the world. Its remnants of feudalism are particularly apt for concentrating power in the hands of the rich and imposing monopoly over public right.

Furthermore, Britain has traditionally been a pillar of stabil-

ity. Alan Trench, professor of politics at the Ulster University, said in February: "It is quite extraordinary. This is happening in a country which was long regarded, and regarded itself, as a beacon of constitutional stability. So suddenly to have moved from stasis into a sequence of very febrile and interlocking debates is remarkable and may say something about just how unstable that apparent stability really was."

This is a stability that was achieved via the historic compromise of the constitutional arrangements in which sovereignty is vested in the monarch in parliament, and its core is so rotten that even the prospect of a break-up of the Union inevitably throws such long-standing constitutional issues into relief. This is already apparent. Writing in *The Times* last year, Alex Salmond argued that a "democratic deficit" exists in Britain due to its absence of a written constitution. "Constitutions in the modern world are more than just a necessary defence of essential liberties but also an expression of citizens' rights and responsibilities," he said, indicating the right to higher education as an example, and stressing the role of the citizen participation in drafting a constitution. The issue of popular versus parliamentary sovereignty has even been raised in some quarters, particularly in the earlier legal debate over the status of the referendum.

The US has its own reasons to be concerned with the break-up of the United Kingdom. Back on October 31, 2012, the *Washington Post* carried an editorial claiming that Scotland would be "unable to contribute meaningfully to global security and its independence would significantly weaken America's foremost ally".

Writing in the *Washington Post* on January 7 this year, Lord George Robertson summarised the view of Anglo-American imperialism as follows:

"If Scotland's separatist government gets its way in a referendum planned for September, the 300-year-old union of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland – the United States' oldest and closest ally – will be on the road to disintegration. The global balance would be substantially upset should one of the West's key unions, and its second-biggest defence power, split up. The United Kingdom has always punched above its weight diplomatically and militarily. A breakup would have a serious effect on its role in the world – all the more so because Britain's nuclear-deterrent base is in Scotland, and those advocating separation have pledged to expel it. With the United States and other countries viewing a possible British withdrawal from the European Union as negative, how much more disturbing would they find a breakup of the country itself?"

Meanwhile, in the EU, Spain has been particularly vocal in seeking to block Scottish independence. The Spanish government wishes to avoid any developments that open the door to independence for Catalonia and the Basque country from Spain. The Spanish and British governments and EU Commission president José Manuel Barroso have each insisted that an independent Scotland would have to re-apply for EU membership.

Independence movements exist in other big European powers, and the EU, as a union of the monopolies with an imperial aim, is resisting motion in this direction that could weaken these powers. Furthermore, the EU is concerned that a separation of Scotland from Britain would leave the concentration of eurosceptic opinion in the remainder of Britain, making its exist from the EU more likely.

Whatever the outcome of the referendum, the British establishment, system, arrangements, and party-dominated system lie exposed. It is up to the working class to take the lead over questions of democratic renewal, settling scores with representative democracy, a modern constitution and where political power lies. It is able to resolve these issues in such a way that opens the possibility of a new, free and equal union of modern, sovereign states, constituted according the rights held by virtue of being human and where sovereignty is vested in the people, with the progressive aim of developing these nations rather than the backward dream of rebuilding empires.

INTERNATIONAL

Celebrate the Release of Cuban Patriot Fernando Gonzalez from US Prison

On February 27, Fernando González, one of the five Cuban heroes unjustly imprisoned in US jails for more than 15 years, was released from a US prison after serving his full, unjust and long sentence. Fernando was transferred from the federal penitentiary in Safford, Arizona, to Immigration Services to start the process of deportation to Cuba. Fortunately, he was deported to Cuba the following day. We rejoice with all those around the world who are fighting for the freedom of the five.

The Cuban Five are Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González. Fernando is the second of the internationally-known Cuban Five

to be freed, after René. Although released in 2011, René had to complete a term of parole and renounce his US citizenship before he could return to Cuba in 2013. In this connection, we vehemently condemn the refusal of the British government on March 3 to grant René González a visa to enter Britain just a few hours before he was due to fly from Havana to London. René González was to be the principal witnesses for the International Commission of Inquiry into the case of the Cuban Five which is taking place at the Law Society in London, March 7 and 8.

Fernando, René, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero and René Labañino, known as the Cuban Five, were arrested in 1998 while monitoring terrorist groups based in Florida responsible for launching terrorist attacks against Cuba from US soil. They were imprisoned after a totally unjust trial. The joy of Fernando's return to Cuba is mitigated by the fact that Gerardo, Antonio and Ramón are still serving their sentences in US penitentiaries and the fight to win their freedom must continue until they too are returned to their loved ones in Cuba.

The case of the Cuban Five highlights the US unacceptable hostile policy toward Cuba, including the use of terrorism, to undermine the sovereignty not only of Cuba but also of those nations that have normal trade and diplomatic relations with Cuba.

It is with the most shameful double-standard that the US persecutes a war on terror while supporting terrorism against Cuba. It is with utter hypocrisy that the US, to serve its narrow political aims, has placed Cuba on its list of countries that support terrorism, despite the fact that Cuba has never carried out terrorism. To the contrary, Cuba defends human rights and shares weal and woe with the oppressed and suffering people of the world by sending its humanitarian brigades wherever they are needed, not to mention the sacrifices it made when it answered the call of the Angolan people to assist them in the fight against the terrorism of South African Apartheid.

The Cuban Five are exemplars of the Cuban Revolution. Their dignity and steadfastness of principles are modern human qualities forged in the fight to affirm rights and sovereignty and will never be surrendered, something that the US imperialists, with their outlook of pettiness, revanchism and retrogression cannot seem to fathom. We join with all peace- and justice-loving people around the world in demanding that President Obama and the US ruling circles release all the remaining Cuban Five immediately.

Free All the Cuban Five! No to US-Backed Terrorism against Cuba! Hands Off Cuba!

Denounce the Fraudulent Human Rights Report against the DPRK

In February, a three-member Commission of Inquiry associated with the UN Human Rights Council issued a fraudulent "human rights report". The report is based on material concocted by hostile forces backed by the United States, the European Union and Japan. The DPRK "categorically and totally rejects the report" which it decries as an "instrument of a political plot aimed at sabotaging the socialist system and defaming the country."

The DPRK points out that the creation of the Commission and the report itself are part of the attempts at subversion and regime change against the country, using the guise of concern about human rights. The DPRK will "continue to strongly respond to the end to any attempt of regime-change and pressure under the pretext of 'human rights protection'," said the statement.

The Commission itself was barred entry to the DPRK and collected its ludicrous and completely anecdotal "evidence" from those that are hostile to or speak ill of the DPRK. Those powers which instigated the Commission lack the credibility to make accusations against the DPRK. The US and EU actively commit war crimes and rights violations via military aggression, invasions and occupations, while the ruling elite in Japan is champing at the bit to revise Japan's constitution so as to be able to actively participate in such imperialist adventures. The imperialists are past-masters of the Nazi technique of the big lie in the modern era, fabricating evidence to justify aggression and war, and repeating it via their imperialist monopoly media mouthpieces to try to sow doubt and provide pretexts to go to war.

The so-called human rights report is another attempt to foment passions in favour of regime change in the DPRK. It accuses the government of the DPRK of using food as "a means of control over the population" and "deliberate starvation" to punish political and ordinary prisoners. It says nothing about the criminal blockade of the DPRK by the US for the last six decades which has had a serious impact on the former's ability to conduct normal relations with other countries, including meeting the needs of its people for food and other necessities through trade. It is the US which has the history of withholding goods and services from the DPRK, in violation of signed agreements, as a means of coercion and control and of interfering in the internal affairs and political system of the DPRK, in violation of international law. The DPRK is forced to dedicate a substantial portion of its economy to self-defence precisely to defend itself from the ceaseless attempts of the US to eliminate it so as to take over the entire peninsula and gain a greater foothold in Asia.

Human rights can only be defended on a principled basis in respect of international laws and norms, not on an arbitrary basis that seeks to further narrow, self-serving and ulterior motives. We call on everyone to get to know the reality of the DPRK.

All Out to Make the 35th Anniversary of RCPB(ML) a Decisive Success

Activists of the Party are mobilising for the Celebration and Seminar marking the 35th anniversary of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) focusing on the crucial necessity to build a Party of modern communism, a mass communist party, as what the times are calling for at this juncture of the 21st century.

Such a Party is at the centre of and pervades all of revolutionary life. The Party's call for the 35th anniversary is one for all who are in motion, are looking to strengthen the organisation and resistance of the working class and people's movements, to join in and contribute to the work of releasing that human power which will avert the danger of war and build a society with human beings at the centre.

What distinguishes the Party is its revolutionary ideology and its methods of work. It bases itself on solving the problems of the 21st century through unity in action starting from the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. Therefore it does not demand a peculiar affiliation as to a sect, but points out that the Party, utilising modern definitions, is the instrument for organising the working class to take up its historic role to save the day, and vest sovereignty in the people. In other words, how to empower the people as the decision-makers in society is a key problem taken up for solution. The Party has its vision for a new society, which is neither a truism nor a utopia, but, like the solution of any scientific problem, involves the practical application of sound theory.

In this respect, the Seminar organised on March 16 will set the scene for the work to learn from the example of John Buckle, the first general secretary of RCPB(ML), and the work to found the Party and lead the movements of the working class and people. This is extremely exciting work and the Party gives the call for all serious forces to become involved and join in.

You are warmly invited to a
CELEBRATION AND SEMINAR
On the 35th Anniversary of RCPB(ML)

What the Times Are Calling For: Building the Party in the 21st Century

Sunday, March 16, 2014

Seven Dials Club, 42 Earlham Street, London WC2H 9LA
Enter by door marked "Seven Dials Club" and ascend the stairs.
(Nearest tube: Leicester Square; note that Covent Garden tube will be closed on March 16)

SEMINAR: 2.00 – 6.00 pm
(Suggested registration fee: £15 waged; £10 unwaged — covers tea & coffee, plus buffet at the Social)

On Learning from the Example of John Buckle and the Work to Found the Party and Lead the Movements of the Working Class and People

CELEBRATION AND SOCIAL: 6.30 – 10.00 pm

Come and join in and contribute to the work of releasing that human power which will avert the danger of war and build a society with human beings at the centre!

RSVP to office@rcpbml.org.uk
Please also contact RCPB(ML) to contribute to this work

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The title *The Line of March* is taken from the programmatic document of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), "The Line of March to a New Society". It signifies that the goal of the movements of the working class and people and their struggles is indeed a new society, a society that puts human beings and their rights at the centre of all considerations. It signifies that the movements of the working class and people are aimed at removing the obstacles which are placed on the progress of this line of march.

Order Your Copy of Line of March Now!

Subscription rates within Britain (including p&p) are £35.95 per year. Political contibutions to support this important work are also welcome. Cheques should be made payable to 'RCPB(ML)' and sent to 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA. For any subscription applications from abroad or for bulk subscriptions, please contact RCPB(ML) directly. For all other enquiries regarding the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), please visit our Website: www.rcpbml.org.uk

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