

Workers Weekly

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Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

Defeat the Programme of New Labour!

The issue facing the working class and people in Britain is to defeat the programme of the ruling elite to take Britain further down the path of preparing for

fascism and war.

In this crucial task, the working class cannot hand over the initiative and political rights to any other force, including political parties over which they have no

control.

The virtual news blackout until the last minute regarding John McDonnell's candidacy with its manifesto of "Another World Is Possible" is evidence that the

ruling elite does not want any alternative raised. It is evidence that it wishes to suppress any trace of a call around which the working class and people can

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Safeguard the Future of the NHS!

THE GOVERNMENT'S TREATMENT OF THE QUESTION OF NHS FINANCES IS FRAUDULENT



Demonstration in May 2006 in defence of the NHS with slogans such as 'Defend the NHS' and 'Sack Blair not health workers'.

- Workers' Weekly Health Group

Following on from her declaration some time ago that the NHS was now out of "deficit" and "in budget" in an interview with the *Financial Times*, Patricia Hewitt has said that she expects that the "National Service will continue to grow, and grow faster than the rate of

economic growth generally". She then went on to say that over the next 12 months "we will see, instead of constant financial problems, constant improvements", that the service would head towards reducing the total maximum wait for treatments to 18 months, and said that it was

increasingly finding ways to treat people better, faster and for less money.

This treatment of the question of NHS finances is fraudulent. It is part and parcel of the government's programme of "investment with reform" of public services designed

to divert public funds so as to pay the rich. Cutbacks in the funding of the NHS are being disguised as "deficits" in budgets which last year were reported to be £547 million in

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Commentary

Gordon Brown's Leadership Launch:

Answer with Organising for Working Class Power and People's Empowerment

GORDON BROWN SET OUT HIS CORE BELIEFS IN A SPEECH ON MAY 11, launching his "campaign" to be leader of the Labour Party, and the next Prime Minister.

He attempts to portray himself as the bringer of change, a provider of a manifesto which will win back the trust of the people. Indeed, the candidates for the deputy leadership express similar sentiments also. This is a difficult task, because not only has Gordon Brown been the co-architect of the New Labour programme, he explicitly takes responsibility for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which he

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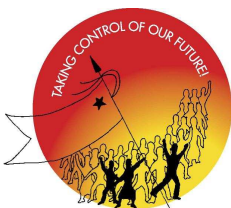
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YOUTH+ STUDENT

page of the
**Workers'
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Youth Group

**“Academic freedom” and the case of
Prof Coleman:**

For an Enlightened Direction for Science in the Universities!

The *Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)* recently published a series of articles on what it refers to as threats to “academic freedom”. As part of this, it covered the case of David Coleman, Professor of Demography at the Centre for Population Research at Oxford University. This particular issue has been the centre of some attention lately; in Manchester on May 17, a rally was held against the invite to David Coleman by Manchester University.

The issue was raised when members of Oxford Student Action for Refugees (STAR) raised a petition questioning the activities of demographer Prof Coleman in the light of “his very public work for the pressure group Migration Watch” and “his long but quite unpublicised involvement in the Eugenics Society/Galton Institute”. In his own words, he has acted as an honorary adviser to Migration Watch from its beginning and is a member of its Council.

The petition stated that “Coleman is acquiring a public image in the ongoing public debate about immigration, and that he is using his status as a university professor to legitimise the views and reports produced by Migration Watch ... Through his

many media appearances, Professor Coleman is bringing the university into disrepute by associating it with the views of Migration Watch.” It called on the University to ask him “to refrain from using his academic title when appearing on behalf of Migration Watch in the media” and to “consider the suitability of Coleman’s continued tenure as a Professor of the University, in light of his well-known opinions and affiliations relating to immigration and eugenics.”

The reaction of the media was one of labelling the petition a “gagging order” and a “witch hunt”. The *THES* in particular has been attempting to set the debate in terms of taking sides over whether or not one supports “free speech” as part of a wider campaign of setting the agenda in higher education and research.

Rather than being drawn into this debate, let us take a look at the Galton Institute, eugenics and Migration Watch.

The ideas of eugenics were first systematised by Sir Francis Galton in the latter half of the 19th Century. In his 1883 *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, he described the word:

“We greatly want a brief word to express the science of improv-

ing stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had. The word eugenics would sufficiently express the idea; it is at least a neater word and a more generalised one than viriculture which I once ventured to use.”

Though this definition is manifestly racist in form, the focus of early eugenics was that “genius” and “talent” were hereditary traits in humans which were particularly correlated with social class. It was part of that ideology regarding the existence of classes in society as “natural”. The idea was to encourage breeding amongst those of “good stock”. This went hand in hand with a desire for racial purity. In the words of Galton in introduction to his 1863 book *Hereditary Genius*: “it would be quite practicable to produce a highly-gifted race of men by judicious marriages during several consecutive generations.”

The Galton Institute, of which David Coleman is a life Fellow, derives from the Eugenics

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Hilary Benn's Defence of "Universal Values": Staking the Claim for a Moral Compass



On April 16, Hilary Benn, presently the Secretary of State for International Development, made a keynote speech in the United States entitled *Where does Development fit in Foreign Policy?*

In fact, there was very little in this speech that had anything to do with "development", even in terms of Benn's own definition which suggested that it meant "helping our fellow human beings to change their own lives for the better". Instead Benn delivered a speech which, as well as including all the usual phrases which British government ministers always mention for US audiences concerning the dangers of isolationism and the need for multilateralism, mainly focused on the defence of so-called universal values, and the means and mechanisms needed for such a defence. Some commentators are already speculating that Benn might become the new Foreign Secretary in the next Labour Cabinet; if so this speech might be a foretaste of things to come. It was perhaps in this context that Benn included in his speech a request for the closure of Guantanamo Bay.

In this context, the speech could be seen as part of the attempt to rescue the Labour Party from the legacy of Tony Blair and stake its claim to be guided by a moral compass. Benn's remarks had an element of attempting to stick together again the pieces of the shattered illusions and distance the future direction of the government from being identified with war and aggression, and the hegemonic

drive of US imperialism.

Other media reports made much of the fact that Benn used the speech to claim that in Britain "we do not use the phrase 'war on terror'." This is allegedly because in the government's view what they claim is a struggle against "international terrorism" cannot be won by "military means alone". According to Benn, the struggle is between "the vast majority of the people of the world" and those who want to "force their individual and narrow views on others, without dialogue, without debate, through violence". The irony of these words is the fact that Hilary Benn wishes the British government to be seen as part of the vast majority of humanity, rather than acknowledging that it is at the head of those attempting to impose narrow values through violence.

According to the viewpoint of Hilary Benn, the British government stands for forming a "new consensus" around the globe on the question of values. "Democracy. Freedom. Tolerance. Education," Benn claimed, are such "universal values", adding that "many values which in the past have been wrongly claimed as distinctly Western are common to us all". These "universal values" are however under threat, Benn claims on behalf of the government, and UN and other international machinery must be strengthened to deal with the threat of "international terrorism" from those who oppose such values.

If the criteria for appointment to

high government office is a total denial of reality then Benn should do well. The fact is that the idea that Britain, the US and the other big powers are the defenders of "universal values" and "international law" and that this therefore gives them the right to invade other countries and maraud around the globe has been thoroughly exposed and is being actively opposed by people throughout the world. Only recently General Sir Michael

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Rose, former head of UN forces in Bosnia, who last year called for going to war in Iraq on "false pretences", argued that the government should admit defeat in Iraq and said that he felt that it was right for the people of Iraq to be fighting against US and British forces.

For Benn to claim that the British government is concerned with creating a "peaceful and prosperous" world is also completely at variance with reality. It is certainly true that the world is more interdependent than in the

past. However, that is one reason why the conclusion can be drawn that the values of the 19th century promoted by the Labour government are completely outdated and have no role to play in international affairs, even if the Anglo-American imperialists were to stop trying to impose them on the world by force but rather by what Benn refers to as "soft power".

The history of the last century in particular has shown that people are not satisfied with the prescriptions of the big powers, the dictatorship of the monopolies and financial institutions, and the form of representative democracy, which prevents people empowering themselves, taking control of what belongs to them and becoming the decision-makers. But this failed prescription is exactly what Benn and the Labour Party, who offer more of the same and demand that it is these values that must be adhered to throughout the world, are proposing as a moral compass which will regenerate faith in the Labour government.

Facts show that neo-liberal globalisation has brought no benefits to the working people of Britain or the rest of the world; it has not brought "development". The "war on terror" has not been an aberration, a path adopted as a personal whim by Tony Blair, though he has been its most ardent champion. It is through complete opposition to so-called "universal values" as part of the struggle for a new world, in which the people can assume centre-stage, that genuine economic, social and political development will take place.

Defeat the Programme of New Labour!

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rally.

When the people ten years ago were strengthening their opposition to the neo-liberal programme of the government of the day, the ruling elite were happy to welcome Tony Blair onto the scene to promise the people a "New Britain" through a "Third Way". An electoral coup was prepared to push retrogression under the signboard of the New.

Today that programme is so much in crisis that the decision has been made that the working people can be given no opportunity to think and discuss. The next Prime Minister is to appear on the scene with a "coronation". The "Labour Party uniting behind Gordon Brown" is not a sign of the strength of the Labour Party but of its crisis and of the transformation of political parties into the executive arm of the state on behalf of the owners of capital.

Whereas Tony Blair came to the electorate with his "Third Way", Gordon Brown is standing before the Labour Party with his "moral compass". One can predict that this "moral compass" will become tarnished even more quickly than the "Third Way" was exposed as the programme for fascism and war. It will not provide, nor is its aim to provide, a direction for the working class and people, nor will talk of a "servant government" and the necessity for a written constitution empower the working class, vest sovereignty in the people or guarantee the rights of individuals, collectives or nations within Britain.

The working class must redouble its efforts to organise for political power in order to ensure that the people are sovereign and can take the decisions which affect the direction of the economy and set the aim for society.

Commentary

Gordon Brown's Leadership Launch: Answer with Organising for Working Class Power and People's Empowerment

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declares was the right decision. In introducing his campaign, he says that he expects citizens to "play by the rules", rules of the game which Tony Blair emphasised were changing; they are the rules as declared by the government. Future "fairness" is to be extended only to those "who earn it". The people's "priorities" are to be his "driving purpose", but he is quick to point out as another warning to the people that it is also the case that "as the world changes our priorities must change". It is evident that the aim of the exercise is to overcome the opposition of the working class and people to the New Labour programme which has unfolded over the past ten years with an elaboration of "new ideas", "vision" and "experience" which do nothing to change the direction of that programme.

The speech of Gordon Brown begins to unfold the scenario for the future that serves the interests of the powers-that-be, the owners of capital that wield economic and political power. The power-striving-to-be, the working class, the creators of wealth in the social economy, must answer with their own scenario.

The scenarios

The powers-that-be wish to consolidate the stance of taking the moral high ground at the same time as wrecking society and committing crimes of aggression abroad. This they reason can shore up their defence of universal values and the fiction of Britishness at a time when the people's demand is for the defence of the rights of all and the flourishing of all cultures. It is also a time when the demand for national rights is taking root, and the movement to

ensure modern sovereign states of Scotland, Wales and England is gaining momentum. It is also a time when the attacks on the rights of migrants and asylum seekers is being fiercely resisted, and the different sections of the people are demanding that it is they who should have a say and play by their own rules, not some rules imposed by condescending saviours. The powers-that-be wish to move on from the crime and tragedy that is the occupation of Iraq and the eradication of its sovereignty. But the people will not and cannot forget this crime against humanity and demand that those who are responsible be brought to account.

Demand for new arrangements

The demand of the people is also for a written constitution which enshrines the rights of all and gives them a guarantee, including their national rights and the right of the people to govern themselves. But the issue is, who will write such a constitution, upon which experience will it be based; will it be framed so as to shut the people out from decision-making, and claim authority from some higher power, or will it be based on the foundation of the people being sovereign and political power deriving from that authority. The powers-that-be want to pre-empt the demand that a written constitution derive its authority from the movements of the working class and people who see the necessity for the principles of an anti-war government to be expressly elaborated, and do not wish that any such principles can be abrogated at will by a parliament or a judiciary that stands over and above the electorate.

On all these counts, Gordon Brown stands with the powers-

that-be and not with the movements for change and empowerment of the working class and people. He states that he wants to govern in a different way. But this is a feint to cover over that he is trying to sweep under the carpet the crisis of credibility, and actually consolidate power in a parliament that disempowers the people. What is meant when Gordon Brown says: "This is the 21st century progressive view; the citizen in control, being served not told by government, a servant state"? The people demand new arrangements of governance, to be not subjects but decision-makers.

Working class answer

The old programme of "New Labour", that is of anti-labour, "one-nation", chauvinist labourism, is one of "making Britain great again". Gordon Brown's programme of being a "servant" because one has "faith" is this self-same programme. It has a rationale which enforces rather than diminishes the 19th-century values of the English ruling elite under conditions of global neo-liberalism and the hegemony of US imperialism and the dictate of the monopolies and the international financiers. These are the values of "Britishness", by which is meant the Britain of empire, of the "white man's burden", of paternalistic colonialism. The fact that these values are so anachronistic and the people will not accept them means that in today's world they are applied with "hard power", that is with increased viciousness, revenge-seeking and armed force.

The working class must answer with strengthening its orientation to become itself the power-that-is, and empower the people as the decision-makers.



Celebrating May Day

Actions across the world on May Day demonstrated the fight of the working class and people to build a society which defends and guarantees the rights of all. The determination to defeat the Anglo-US programme of engulfing the world in fascism and war was embodied in demonstrations marking May First, a day of unity and struggle. In Britain, in opposition to the retrogression represented by ten years of New Labour government, the demand is for the programme of the working class which expresses the struggle to build resistance and plant the alternative: *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes.*

Hundreds of people took part in May Day events across Tyneside. On Tuesday, May 1, a rally took place at the Newcastle Monument organised by PCS who were on strike against job cut-backs and worsening conditions of work. On the evening a meeting and celebration took place in South Tyneside. On Saturday, May 5, the May Day march and rally took place in Newcastle. Hundreds of people joined in the march led by Broughton Brass Band through Newcastle to Exhibition Park.

At the Rally at Exhibition Park, speakers included Paul Kenny, General Secretary of the GMB,

Mary Ferguson, PCS NEC member, Kath Sainsbury of *Justice First*, Dominique Kayembe, a *Tyneside Community Action for Refugees* (TCAR) member from the Democratic Republic of Congo, David Golding of *Developing Coordinator Make Poverty History NE*, Joy Mitchell of *Trident Ploughshares*, and John McDonnell MP, then candidate for the Labour Party leadership.

Workers from many countries united to celebrate international workers day in central London on May 1,



with a special focus on the need to defend public services and to affirm the rights of all migrant workers.

Around eight thousand workers, trade unions, and political and immigrant organisations gathered for a demonstration from Clerkenwell Green to Trafalgar Square, where a rally was held.

Thousands of migrant workers staged a mass rally in London on May 7 to demand legal status to stay. The Strangers into Citizens campaign was joined by union leaders, immigrants, community activists, MPs and church groups in its call for a one-off “earned amnesty” for an estimated 500,000 irregular migrant workers living in Britain.

A colourful procession passed through Whitehall prior to a rally in Trafalgar Square featuring drummers, whistle-blowers and Latin American bands, playing in

Top: Under the banner ‘Strangers into Citizens’ thousands of migrant workers staged a mass rally in London on May 7 to demand legal status to stay. **Left:** March through Newcastle on May 5 to a Rally in Exhibition Park.

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Celebrating May Day

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spite of driving rain. Some carried banners reading: "Abolish all racist immigration controls". Other placards read: "No-one is illegal. Regularisation for all."

Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor demanded: "Our government and the governments all over the world must treat migrant workers with

justice and with dignity."

Across the US, spirited and determined demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of workers took place on May Day. The actions denounced deportations, detentions and the brutal separation of families. They stood against racism and war, against profiling and the terrorism of the government.

In Cuba, the May Day parade began on the historic José Martí Plaza de la Revolución in Havana. Raúl Castro, second secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, headed the central event for



International Workers' Day.

The huge crowd of more than one million capital residents demanded justice for the five Cubans incarcerated in US jails and denounced the release from prison of Luis Posada Carriles, the mastermind of the mid-flight sabotage of a Cuban passenger plane in 1976 which led to the death of all 73 aboard.

As an expression of the fact that Cuba is not alone, 1,645 representatives of trade unions and social movements from 242 organisations and 74 countries were present at the main event in the capital, including delegates from the International Youth in Solidarity with the Five Conference that had just ended in Havana.

Working people throughout the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) celebrated May Day. Also, a May Day reunification-oriented rally of northern and

southern Korean workers for implementing the June 15 Joint Declaration took place in Changwon, south Korea between April 29 and May 1.

Militant demonstrations, reflecting the reality of *One Humanity, One Struggle*, took place throughout the world, including in Canada, Mexico,

Haiti, Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, France, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, Senegal, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, India, Nepal, China, Indonesia and the Philippines.



"Academic freedom" and the case of Prof Coleman: For an Enlightened Direction for Science in the Universities!

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Education Society, later simply the Eugenics Society, which was founded in 1907. It changed its name to the Galton Institute in 1989. Its direct connection with the past is evident in its stated aims, such as to promote the study of "human heredity and of its social implications" and the relevance of heredity to "human well-being in the broadest sense".

Migration Watch, for which David Coleman is an Honorary Consultant, on the other hand, is an independent organisation, chaired by Sir Andrew Green, a former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The group introduces itself on its website with the sentence, "While we appreciate the valuable contribution that many earlier immigrants have made, we believe that the numbers have now become too great." This sums up their position, which is based on the anti-people concept of *weighing up human beings against economic worth*. "We also recognise that many immigrants have made a valuable contribution to our society in terms of both skills and diversity," they state. At the same time, in January of this year, they issued a now notorious report stating that the net gain to the British economy of immigration amounted to only 4 pence per week per person.

Both this line and eugenics are sides of the same coin. Part of eugenics is to eliminate the supposed economic burden due to the existence of "dysgenic" individuals, i.e. those of "inferior stock"; it is fascist ideology. This logic led to the compulsory euthanasia programme of the Nazis, with its associated propaganda and slogans such as: "This person suffering from hereditary defects costs the community 60,000 Reichsmark during his lifetime. Fellow Germans, that is your money, too."

While such history has discred-

ited overt eugenicism, eugenic thinking shows itself in, and is indeed promoted by, each news item reporting the asserted finding of a genetic basis for this or that aspect of human existence, particularly behaviour. For example, "Genes may be to blame for infidelity", "Mental illness 'in the genes'", "Courting behaviour 'in the genes'" and "Smoking is in the genes" are just a few BBC articles from recent years.

So to turn to Prof Coleman, we read in his paper *Britain at the Demographic Heart of Europe?* that "Britain compares rather unfavourably with the rest of Europe in a number of fertility indicators which suggest that a high proportion of births in Britain will be born into unfavourable material and social circumstances by virtue of the youth or single parent status of the mother. The Galton Institute may wish to take an interest in these developments."

The phrase "unfavourable material and social circumstances" shows that nothing fundamental has changed in this thinking since the days of Galton. Another paper, *A Study of the Spatial Aspects of Partner Choice from a Human Biological Viewpoint*, which "considers geographical and social aspects of marital choice in modern Britain and their likely genetic import", is in a similar vein. He has also written a paper entitled *Does Europe Need Immigrants? Population and Work Force Projections*, where the starting-point of the article is whether Europe needs more immigrants to restore its age structure and its work force, concluding that "attention should be given to making it easier for women to combine their desires for children with those for work", presumably since European women make more favourable material. Eugenics and economic worth are closely married in Coleman's papers.

It should be noted also that the



Oxford University Centre for Population Research, at which Coleman is Professor, has the long-term aim to "promote more speculative forward thinking and demographic 'trouble-shooting' about future demographic issues well", since, "in the 21st century new demographic developments, unprecedented in history, face the fifty countries of the developed world. These trends may be summarised as 'fewer babies, longer lives, diverse households, older populations, living alone, more immigrants', all of which raise important theoretical issues and practical problems." Prof Coleman therefore leads projects such as "Britain's place in Europe's population", "Patterns of excess early-age fertility in the English-speaking world" and "Demographic consequences of international migration to the UK".

In the article he wrote in his own defence, published in *The Telegraph*, Coleman tells us, "I put my head above the parapet with Migration Watch because I was alarmed at what I saw as an increasing tendency by official spokesmen, political and others, to present a somewhat partial interpretation of statistics on migration, to reinvent the migration history of Britain in ways that supported the official case, and to present analyses of the advantages of the economic and demographic effects of migration which tended to ignore its drawbacks."

The issue, however, is one of humanity. The professor cannot appreciate the offence of reducing the issue to the balance of economic benefits; he has the right to conscience, but to negate humanity in such a manner is fundamentally anti-conscious. Such views find no place within a pro-human, pro-social science. In the context of the bicentenary of the end of the slave trade, the world's

people have experienced the whole history of colonialism and the "debate", for example, on how human were the African slaves, as well as eugenics, taken up in the most extreme form by Nazism, but which is essentially the argument which leads to the holocaust. Such reactionary ideology plays its part, as did the earlier crude racism, in justifying contemporary racist and inhuman practice by the state in, for example, its treatment of migrants.

Coleman's argument is also that he is somehow defending science by countering "the creation of an establishment consensus in the 'respectable' media and elsewhere intolerant of dissenting interpretations" with views that are "based on evidence and logic". He has a "balanced view": "Neither do I feel that there are no benefits from migration – far from it. But there is pain as well as gain."

However, scientists, students and academic institutions do not exist in a vacuum – their views and arguments influence public policy, and students have every right to expose racist and anti-human views whenever they surface. Rather than being diverted by, or taking sides over, the dogmatic rendering of reducing the arguments to an issue of free speech, which is a separate matter altogether and not how the issue poses itself, students and academia as a whole have the duty to take up their social responsibility to defend science against attacks which are taking place under the spurious signboard of "academic freedom".

Workers' Weekly Youth Group calls on students and staff to unite around the demand for an enlightened direction for science in the universities and fight against the imposition of a retrogressive and irrationalist content and the fostering of pseudo-science.

Safeguard the Future of the NHS!

THE GOVERNMENT'S TREATMENT OF THE QUESTION OF NHS FINANCES IS FRAUDULENT

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an overall budget that will be £92 billion in 2007-8 in which the NHS as a whole is being urged to make up this shortfall with "efficiency" savings. Far from being due to inefficiency, this declared "deficit" represents in disguise an ongoing plan of hospital and service closures, job losses for nurses, doctors and support staff without any consideration for the effect on the people and their health care needs in their communities. The declaration that the NHS is now "in budget" is equally fraudulent. This declaration is based on the figures for the final quarter of last year that will be published in May and the latest forecast (Q3 figures). These show that the NHS as a whole was on track to deliver a "surplus" of £13 million by the end of the financial year. However, this has been brought about with a change in the *Resources and Accounting Budgeting* (RAB) when the "Government also announced that it would now allocate, as planned, the £450m contingency to the NHS". Then the boast that the health service "budget" now allegedly will "grow faster than the rate of economic growth generally" is based on Patricia Hewitt's admission that the National Health Service may be funded at 3% and that inflation will remain as forecast at 2.75% when inflation is running at over 4% and set to rise.

Financing at a whim

These figures reveal the arbitrary nature of the concepts of "balance", "deficit" and "surplus" as the government applies them to the NHS. Overall, what is obscured is the whole question of how the health service is financed and whose responsibility it is. The government demands that health workers and health administrators get their budgets in balance rather than meet all the health care needs of their health population. This

flies in the face of a government's obligation to budget so as to provide the funding that meets the health care needs of the whole populations, assessed with the participation of health workers and health administrators.

Meanwhile, the government can announce good news or bad news, a funding crisis or new health care initiatives, at its own whim with little reference to the real problems that the health service and those who work within it face. So, for example, when Patricia Hewitt announced the new vision for maternity services, no funding was even allocated, let alone guaranteed, to provide for this vision. Instead, funding is expected to come out of existing budgets and lead to cuts elsewhere which the government will describe as "efficiencies". In stark contrast, when it comes to funding for the private sector, such as with PFI, these businesses are guaranteed vast resources in contracts paid over 30 or 40 years.

Competing claims

Furthermore, treating NHS funding as if it has to be assessed by thousands of accountants, as if it makes profit and loss, as if health care is on a bought sold basis with its built in mechanism to force the prices up and create shortages makes no sense and has nothing to do with funding a modern health care system. Health care, like other vital public services, is not a commodity to be bought and sold. Health care is a right, and the people's claim on society for this health care must be met. The right must be guaranteed through the allocation of the appropriate portion of wealth that society produces for the provision of health care to all members of that society.

In summary, one of the most important issues in safeguarding the future of the NHS is that of the funding of the health service and investments to safeguard its future. What is presently being obscured

NHS workers demonstration, Bristol, March 2007 in support of the NHS and against the Private Finance Initiative contracts being imposed by New Labour.



in all the furore over budgets are the competing interests

in claiming the national social product. The health service is a social programme that produces no added value. It must be funded through an allocation of the social product created by social production. This allocation must be guided by the people's needs. This is the responsibility of the government in setting its budget, rather than the responsibility lying with those involved in the provision of health care to jump through the hoops of a budget which imposes a rationing of health care.

Health care is a right

Workers' Weekly Health Group calls on the working class and people to oppose the diverting of funds into private sector monopolies, and to take a stand against the fraudulent claim by the government that there is a "financial crisis" in the NHS and therefore that efficiencies must be found, "productivity" raised, and services and hospitals closed, while showcase hospitals and other facilities which benefit the private sector receive practically unlimited resources. Suddenly now the NHS is supposed to be growing economically. What can this be but a justification for treating patients more "efficiently", i.e. cutting the level of care while pouring money into mega-health projects such as scandalous amounts wasted in lucrative contracts with the big IT companies, Treatment Centres, etc. Meanwhile, it is being floated that

the obese, smokers, cancer sufferers and others are putting a strain on the funds of the NHS and will have to be made to pay for care or be denied treatment.

The demand must be for increased investments in the NHS with the outlawing of NHS contracts with privately-owned treatment and diagnostic centres and Private Finance Initiative contracts and the diverting of investment away from the NHS to create "profits" of these and other companies. There must also be a demand that no new contracts be signed, steps taken to bring back all private health care under public control, and a public investigation launched into the privateers with a view to reclaiming the huge profits for the public purse.

The demand to outlaw the involvement of the private sector in public services, the demand to stop paying the rich and increase investments in social programmes, is the demand of health workers everywhere and the working class and people as part of their affirmation that they have first claim on the economy as a whole. The issue is that health care is a right, and this right must be provided with a guarantee.

¹ The Change in RAB means "overspending" NHS trusts who not only had to pay back their debts but also received less income the following year may not now receive less revenue as a result. However, this is not guaranteed as the government has left it to the Strategic Health Authorities to decide.

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