



Lewisham Issue 43 (24 June 2014)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • hospitalworkerbulletin@gmail.com • 0207 394 8923

Ideas for Freedom 2014 Their Class War & Ours

Across the world, capitalists are waging class war against the living standards and rights of workers and oppressed. At Ideas for Freedom, the summer school on 3-6 July in London organised by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL, which publishes Lewisham Health Worker), we will be discussing how we can resist and fight back.

Ideas for Freedom will include lectures, debates, workshops, films and plenty of space for objections, dissent and criticism. It opens with a Thursday night (3 July) Radical Walking Tour of East London and a Friday night (4 July) meeting on "On hundred years of women's struggles, 1914-2014".

The weekend's events are designed to help us "Educate, Agitate and Organise" for socialism.

Educate

Rosie Woods of AWL will debate "Left Foot Forward" editor James Bloodworth on whether socialists should seek to deal with tyranny and strife by advocating "humanitarian intervention" by big powers. Pat Murphy of AWL and Nigerian socialist Yemishi Ilesanmi will speak on socialists and religion. Jean Lane, Jill Mountford and Pete Radcliff of AWL and others will speak on the 1984-85 miners' strike, and other sessions will cover World War One. Camilla Bassi of AWL will speak on Marxism and "intersectionality".

LHW provides a forum for staff at the hospital to tell their stories and air their views. If you have a story to tell or an opinion to share then get in touch.

The bulletin is edited by healthcare professionals.

All articles are published anonymously and we will ensure confidentiality is upheld.

Email: hospitalworkerbulletin@gmail.com

Agitate

Gemma Short of AWL, John McDonnell MP and James Elliot of Labour Students for Free Education will debate what demands we should seek to have the unions make of a Labour government. French socialist Yves Coleman, Greek socialist Theodora Polenta and Matt Cooper of AWL will discuss the rise of the nationalist far right in Europe.

Organise

Ruth Cashman of AWL, Jason Moyer-Lee of IWGB, Holly Fishman-Crook from the Ritz cinema workers strike, and author Gregor Gall will discuss how to rebuild the unions. Cathy Nugent of AWL will debate ISN national secretary Simon Hardy and Edd Bauer from Birmingham Anti-Capitalists on the left after the SWP crisis.

There will be around 30 sessions in all on a range of subjects from TV crime drama to economic theory. A plenary session will anchor the event in its central theme:

Their Class War and Ours.

Easy solution to the "funding gap"

Various health thinktanks and quangos have highlighted a "funding gap" in the NHS budget for 2015-16. Jeremy Hunt plans to take £2bn away from hospitals to spend on social care. Monitor also claim that there is another £5bn gap in next year's secondary care budget. These figures have been used to start an agitation about charging for NHS services. Slowly the idea of charging for GP appointments and other treatments is becoming more and more mainstream. But there is a simple solution to the NHS funding gap – the government could increase the funding. A tiny tax on the super-rich would more than cover the bill.

Gresham PICU closes despite outcry from staff

Without any announcement or recognition of staff concerns, Gresham PICU at the Bethlem Royal Hospital was closed in April. SLAM's capacity to care for some of most its high risk male patients has been reduced by nearly a third. The closure has put great strain on Johnson ICU and Eden ICU at Lambeth Hospital. When both these wards are full, the only option is a transfer to private hospital, sometimes on the other side of London. Unison wrote a scathing response to the closure, which appeared to happen behind the backs of commissioners and ward managers in other parts of the service. Nearly 200 members of staff, including senior clinicians, wrote to management with safety concerns but as yet they have received no formal response to their concerns. There are several lessons to learn from this closure. SLAM management can be quite ruthless in pursuing cuts to the service and give the most minimal lip-service to consulting staff about these changes. SLAM management are also comfortable with having patients treated in hospitals many miles from their homes and support networks. We know that there have been many patient transfers to private hospitals hundreds of miles from London as SLAM has struggled to cope with emergency admissions. However, this closure came with a deliberate plan to close much-needed beds and source those beds elsewhere from providers in West London. This should ring alarm bells for staff at the Ladywell unit. There have long been rumours that SLAM wants to close the Ladywell and move the wards elsewhere. We should start organising now lest these rumours come true.

1 million to strike on July 10

Up to a million public sector workers could strike on July 10 over pay. Local government workers, civil servants, teachers, lecturers and firefighters will be part of the biggest strike day since the pension dispute in 2011. But why aren't we going out with them? Our union leaders are talking about strikes but they haven't got their act together to organise them alongside our brothers and sisters in the rest of the public sector. We need these strikes to be as powerful as possible. That will mean we need democratic grassroots control of the dispute and not leave it in the hands of the well-heeled bureaucrats who (mis)lead our unions.

Spring Crisis in A&E

Never in living memory has the NHS experienced a crisis in Spring, until this year. For the whole of May and the beginning of June A&E departments failed to hit the 95% target for 4 hour waits in A&E. The mild winter and unusually low flu rates meant that A&E departments averted a winter crisis. But in the spring months where everyone is supposed to be full of health and vitality, the NHS is struggling. The prospect for winter look bleak.

Bosses give themselves a pay rise

NHS bosses have taken an average pay rise of 6.1% over the last 2 years. On top of this they have averaged a 36% rise in bonuses, overtime payments and other perks – sometimes as much as £40,000. Yet we have had no pay rise in 3 years. This year we have been denied even a measly 1% recommended by the (not very) independent pay review board. Nurses are turning to food banks. The bosses can get away with this because we let them. If we all collectively refused to work for this pittance then they would be forced to come up with a better offer. That's why we need to organise in our unions for strikes.

Unions prepare for strikes – slowly

The Daily Mirror reports that Unison is preparing for strikes over pay at...Christmas!!! In a leaked letter to Jeremy Hunt, Unison's head of health Christina McAnea said that they will ballot members for strikes in autumn with action starting in the winter. But why the wait? You didn't need to be a clairvoyant to predict that government would extend the pay freeze into this year. The union should have been preparing for strikes right up until 1st April with the plan to strike on that day unless the government changed its position. Instead we have this long drawn out bureaucratic process with a plan for strikes at the most financially tight part of the year. Our unions are democratic organisations – we should be piling the pressure on the bureaucrats to speed up the ballot.