



Lewisham

Issue 26 (26 July 2013)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • awl@workersliberty.org • 0207 394 8923

More patients need more nurses!

It is summer, but this is getting ridiculous. The thermometer where I work has read over 30°C for nigh on a fortnight. Some people are getting fans, and some aren't, and the health and safety manager is being sent round armed only with a thermometer to tell us... it's hot!

Well, I hope your water fountain is by the nurses' station. Since management "can't justify" installing air conditioning for the few weeks of the year that it's really needed, perhaps they could employ some extra staff to give us all extra breaks? And pigs might fly.

The health and safety legislation doesn't help us at all here. There's a legislated minimum temperature of 16°C, but what use is *minimum* temperature legislation in a heatwave? At least our patients have got a cool 26° room to chill out in. Really? How do you get one of those then?

Reports suggest up to 760 people have died because of this heatwave so far. It seems this country is no better at dealing with heat than we are with the snow. But this isn't some innate "British" deficiency — it's a problem of the people who run our workplaces, and our society as a whole, being unwilling to plan and invest for unusual, but potentially catastrophic, circumstances. They could invest in air conditioning units. It would be expensive in the first year, and for much of the year they could be switched off. But in July and August, year after year, they could make us more comfortable, and make our patients more stable. All this chronic stress caused by the heat would be avoided.

But this government only thinks about short-term "savings" — i.e., cuts. A graphic example, just around the corner from us, is the decision to shut Downham fire station. Yes, firefighters do spend some time sat around waiting in stations, but they need to be there ready to go when the call does come in. In this weather, fires are a bigger risk (a large fire closed the M25 in both directions this week!).

Also this week, the NMC was hearing the case against the Mid-Staffs director of nursing. She admitted there was understaffing, when it was unusually busy, as though that was an excuse. But isn't there's always bank, and agency, and just plain, old-fashioned forward planning? There will always be busy times, and hot weather in the summer, so let's buy the air conditioning units, keep the fire brigade, and have mandatory minimum staffing levels.

When the patient numbers increase, the number of nurses should increase! It's not rocket science, is it?

Support the campaign for a 4:1 nursing ratio!

Four to One is a campaign of nursing professionals fighting for a mandatory minimum nurse-to-patient ratio. To find out more about the campaign, including how to get involved, visit the website:

www.4to1.org.uk

NHS cuts to accelerate



As the NHS financial crisis continues, NHS England's Chief Finance Officer has announced an acceleration of cuts over the next 90 weeks.

Under plans outlined in the last government spending review, a new £3.8 billion fund is being set up integrating health and social care. This means a huge amount of NHS funding will be now spent on social care — previously the responsibility of local government.

Paul Baumann, NHS England's Chief Financial Officer says: "How do you generate savings of £2 billion a year on top of the savings we're already making just to keep going...Its quite an heroic undertaking...You can't achieve that by business as usual."

But "business as usual" is exactly what our patients need from us at the moment. When the NHS bureaucrats start wielding the axe, shutting down services, we need to be organised in our teams and in our unions to defy them. They can only make these cuts with our cooperation. Keep calm and carry on!



Workers' Liberty South London's Socialist Sunday

Sunday 25 August, 1-6pm in New Cross (ring 07855 156290 for venue details)

An afternoon of film-showings, educationals, political discussion, food, drink, and socialising (with space for kids to run around!). See workersliberty.org for more.

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



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Nurse Karl

**Our bearded
band 5 with his
finger on the
pulse of
industrial
unrest**

We need real democracy!

Dear Nurse Karl,

In a previous letter, you argued that workers at Lewisham Hospital should organise trade union action (strikes, work-ins etc) if the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign's legal challenge fails to stop the closures and cuts.

But in a democracy, don't we have a duty to respect the decisions made by our elected government? If the judges rule that Jeremy Hunt's decision was lawful, then that decision should stand no matter how

bitter it may be.

If we neglect our basic democratic duties then all sorts of chaos and mayhem breaks out.

Yours, Michelle

Dear Michelle,

You're right to take democracy seriously. It is also one of the cornerstones of my politics.

But real democracy isn't simply voting every five years in a general election. This form of democracy is extremely limited. There are far more democratic ways of running a country than Britain's current system of constitutional monarchy, House of Lords, and parliament. And if the government lies, is unrepresentative, and maintains power through bureaucratic stitch-ups then a grassroots movement from below may be a better representation of democratic will than the politicians in power. A

strike of workers at the hospital, agreed upon through votes in their unions, would be infinitely more democratic than simply accepting the cuts and closures — which no-one who actually works at or uses the hospital ever voted for or had a say in.

The Tories came to power in 2010 on a lie. They said the NHS was safe in their hands and they would avoid any top-down reorganisations. They did not win a majority and could only come to power by negotiating a coalition with the Lib Dems.

They then proposed a policy for the NHS which they never mentioned in their election manifesto. The Health and Social Care Act, the biggest top-down reorganisation in NHS history, was bundled through Parliament. They repeatedly lied that they were not privatising the NHS. Yet here we are, just one year on, and they are already talking about "NHS user charges".

We cannot wait for Labour. Unless Labour is pushed by a mighty movement from below, they will continue with the Tories' cuts and privatisation agenda. In such times, a Labour leader with any backbone would be shouting from the rooftops about the destruction being done to the NHS. Instead we have meek-and-mild Miliband hoping that general discontent with the Tories will bring him to power without having to make too many firm commitments that may upset his backers in big business.

At the moment the balance of power is heavily in favour of the capitalist class. Despite the veneer of democracy, their interests are always well-served by their political servants in Westminster.

We can only change this by organising and demanding a deeper form of democracy — democratic working-class control of our workplaces, our communities and our resources.

Solidarity, Nurse Karl

A child is born...

You may have noticed that a child was born this week. In fact, you probably noticed that lots of children were born this week — not just in London, but all over the world.

The vast majority will not grow up in conditions of unimaginable luxury and riches, with a guaranteed position as the head of a powerful state purely due to their birth. But one child born this week will.

The "Royal Baby" which the nation's media has become so fulsomely obsessed with is part of a monarchy that has no right to exist. The idea that people should have access to privilege and power simply because of the family they were born into is an insult to basic democratic values.

To mark the birth of the little prince, we reprint (right) a speech made by Keir Hardie (a proper Labour MP) in Parliament in 1894, in special session earmarked for MPs to give public congratulations to the Royal Family on the birth of the prince who would eventually become King Edward VIII.

We are asked to rejoice because this child has been born, and that one day he will be called upon to rule over this great Empire. Up to the present time we have no means of knowing what his qualifications or fitness for that task may be. It certainly strikes me — I do not know how it strikes others — as rather strange that those who have so much to say about the hereditary element in another place should be so willing to endorse it in this particular instance. It seems to me that if it is a good argument to say that the hereditary element is bad in one case, it is an equally good argument to say that it is bad in the other. FROM HIS CHILDHOOD ONWARD THIS BOY WILL BE SURROUNDED BY SYCOPHANTS AND FLATTERERS BY THE SCORE (Cries of "Oh! oh!") and will be taught to believe himself as of a superior creation. ("Oh!" oh!) A line will be drawn between him and the people whom he is to be called upon some day to reign over. In due course, following the precedent which has already been set, he will be sent on a tour round the world, and probably rumours of a morganatic alliance will follow (Loud cries of "Oh!" "Order!" and "Question!"), and the end of it all will be that the country will be called upon to pay the bill. (Cries of "Divide!")

More on the monarchy from Workers' Liberty

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