

# Britain: Reject pay-cutting demands of Royal Bournemouth Hospital's chief executive

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The Southwest NHS Fightback committee initiated by the Socialist Equality Party is urging hospital workers to reject the pay-cutting demands of Tony Spotswood, chief executive of the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Spotswood has sent a letter dated August 23, 2012 to some workers at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital in which he attempts to gloss over the real nature of the proposals being put forward by the group of 20 Trusts involved in the South West Pay Terms and Conditions Consortium (SWC), who have formed a “pay cartel” to fix pay rates.

The letter is intended to disarm workers in the face of drastic pay terms and cuts in conditions prepared by the consortium in which Spotswood plays a vital role. The aims of the pay cartel are there in black and white in its Project Initiation Document (PID) leaked earlier this year. Spotswood, like his fellow chief executives, is determined to put the burden of the government's cuts onto NHS workers.

He now tries to fool workers by saying, “It is inevitable that a venture such as this will attract a huge amount of rumor” and “there has been a range of publicity associated with the SWC and much of this is misinformed and designed to unnecessarily heighten concern.”

It is Mr. Spotswood who is guilty of misinformation. His letter and the “frequently asked questions” attached resort to two big lies along with several deceptive comments.

Lie Number 1: The pay cartel's aim is “to explore the potential to extend and develop the pay terms and conditions for staff.”

Who would believe this when the pay cartel is proposing to slash the pay bill by 10 percent? The PID openly talks about the imposition of a direct pay cut,

cutting down enhancement pay for unsocial hours and incremental progression, reducing annual leave and increasing working hours.

Lie Number 2. Another aim of the pay cartel is “to drive up the standards of care”, “Provide best services for patients” and “to improve patient care.”

The proposed cut to pay terms and conditions will inevitably jeopardise patient care, already reeling under the so-called “efficiency savings” brought about by the coalition government's £20 billion cuts to the £108 billion budget of the NHS.

In order to meet the government's targets, resulting in an £8.5 million operating surplus, the Trust has shut down several wards in Bournemouth and Christchurch hospitals during the last two years, creating a constant bed crisis. Essential services relating to patient care have been curtailed by reducing staff numbers through natural wastage and recruitment freezes.

Despite Spotswood's cynical claims to be improving patient care, Southwest NHS Fightback has learned from Royal Bournemouth Hospital workers how patient care has been severely eroded and working conditions of all sections of hospital workers undermined even before the new pay cartel proposals start to bite.

In an effort to claim “we are all in this together,” the chief executive, whose annual salary is £175,000, shamelessly claims that the pay cartel will review pay terms and conditions of all staff groups including board members. But the implication of the pay cuts on the lives of hospital workers and their families, who struggle to make it through to the end of the month, is not comparable to a cut for executives—even if this ever takes place.

The letter insists that unless there are cuts in pay and conditions, the NHS will not have a financially sustainable future and will force the Trusts to “reduce

workforce numbers to a level which undermines the sustainability of high quality services of our patients.”

Spotswood and his counterparts have set up the pay cartel to carry out the government’s strategic requirement of creating a flexible, low-paid workforce so that private companies can take over the NHS. And they are regurgitating the same government claims of financial difficulties to do so.

In opposition to the trade unions, which accept the basis of these claims and are quite prepared to negotiate away hard-won wages and conditions, Southwest NHS Fightback insists the financial crisis was not created by workers and that they should refuse to pay for it.

It is no secret that £1.2 trillion, enough to run the NHS for 10 years, was made available to bail out the banks in 2008 by the Labour government. And while the working class is facing cuts and austerity measures, the super rich have seen their wealth grow.

Much more is at stake than just the fate of workers in the southwest. Around the world, governments have launched economic restructuring programmes aimed at eliminating basic social services and entitlements, with public health care systems a prime target. The pay cartel, with the full backing of the government, is a trial run for the imposition of the same attacks throughout the NHS.

Workers must show the same determination. Action committees should be formed independent of the unions to carry out the task of unifying NHS workers with workers elsewhere and patients.

A mass political movement, based on the fight for socialism, must be built so that workers can take political power and form their own government. This would reorganise the economy to meet human needs, not private profit—including the preservation and extension of decent free health care for all.

Hands off the pay terms and conditions of the hospital workers!

No to privatisation of the NHS!

Build action committees to fight back!



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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