

NHS protesters ask: “Why have we got money for war? Where is the money for our NHS and schools?”

Our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to a number of those attending Saturday’s protest in defence of the National Health Service (NHS).

Janet is a grandmother who attended the march with her daughter. She said, “The NHS is something we should be proud of and it is something we could afford if we put the money in the right place. I just think that having a private market in the NHS is just crazy.”

Martin said, “The NHS is a world renowned service. I know it does not work at its best now because there is no money, but the doctors, the nurses, the people that provide the care are working their butts off. They are being made to look like the bad guys while in actual fact they are not.”

Anna, a teaching assistant, said, “I am here with my daughter because the NHS is so important to us. My father is ill and has been in the hospital since August. My daughter wants to be a paediatric accident and emergency doctor. There should still be the NHS for her to work for. There is so much we are not hearing about. They are selling it bit by bit.

“My friend is a district nurse and the area she works in is now controlled by [private provider] Virgin Care and it’s absolutely disgraceful. The whole system is under severe pressure. Maternity services, post-natal services are all being cut. People are committing suicide because they are not getting support from the mental health services.

“The Tories want to scrap the whole thing. Why have we got money for Trident? Why have we got money for war? Where is the money for our NHS and schools? We’ve got the money but it is going to the wrong places. The government we have is for very, very privileged people. They don’t know what it’s like to be

people like us. Money and resources are definitely there but they are monopolised by the rich people.

“We are actually from [Health Secretary] Jeremy Hunt’s constituency. He made £15 million profit from the sale of a company. He is telling us that we are all in it together. We are not all in it together. He is privileged and rich.”

Asked what she thought should be done to defend the NHS, Anna said, “I think we need a revolution.”

Lin Segal, a teacher, said, “I am so horrified the corporate sector is allowed into the public sector and is outsourcing the public services. It removes any democratic control of services and it is costing us more money. These are basic human rights; they should not be allowed to make a profit from them. Mega-global corporations are increasingly in control of our public resources and are privatising the whole of society.”

Frank Slater, a retired mental health nurse from Lincolnshire, is involved in a fight against NHS services being gutted under a “Sustainability and Transformation Plan” (STP). He said, “The system is on its knees and they are bringing in new plans, which are crazy. We are going to lose the services we already have. In mental health, we always have been the Cinderella of the health service.

“There has always been lack of funds. When the old mental health hospitals closed in the 1980s, we opened up our own place for people with problems because local authorities couldn’t supply places. People who had mental health problems ended up on the streets. Now these attacks will create a far worse situation.”

“United Lincolnshire Health Trusts are trying to put this plan through the back door without even a warning,” he said. “People aren’t fully aware of it.”

Fernando works as a junior doctor at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. He said, "If you go to any hospital now there are so many private companies—Virgin Care, ERS medical and many others. Privatisation is coming through the back door and already a lot of hospitals in the UK are overstretched. I don't want to see my patients have to pay for their care or buy insurance to afford it."

Fernando stated his opposition to government plans to restrict NHS treatment for foreigners in the UK: "I don't want my patients to show me their passports or any sort of papers before I give them treatment. We are not a part of the UK Border Office."

"It is true that the British Medical Association sold out our struggle last year. They went behind our backs to agree to the imposition of new contracts. We were very frustrated with that."

Victoria came to the protest from Lincoln. She said, "I care about the NHS and I wouldn't be here without the NHS. The government is cutting funds in a way that it cannot survive. We were told that in the Lincoln hospital, because the Grantham A&E was closed overnight, there were 80 patients there with 30 in critical care with only one doctor looking after them."

"I definitely think that the capitalist system has come to a period that it cannot tolerate any previous social gains of the working people. I do stand for socialism. That is the only way forward. We need to get rid of the Tory government. I personally do not think that Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party is a solution for the problems we face."

John Tinman, a former local authority worker, said, "The question of the NHS can't be fixed by putting pressure on the Tory government. They will ignore it. They have their own programme and it is to further privatize the NHS."

"Marching doesn't achieve anything. People supported the junior doctors when they went on strike. There should have been a general strike then. That would have been a start."

Diane, a nursery teacher, brought her children to the demonstration. She said, "The next stage after today should be more demonstrations. Everything we had is gone piece by piece. Once the NHS is gone, there will be nothing left."

"The Tories are making legislation so that by 2020, I don't think there will be anything left. If Labour get in

then, they won't be able to undo the changes."

Colin, who is retired, said, "I am concerned about the NHS and I think it's well on the road to privatisation. I am 77 and things have gotten worse during my lifetime."

Hayley, a former teacher from London, came with her family. She said, "I'm sick and tired of vulnerable people being penalized. Without the NHS, my partner would be dead as he has multiple health issues."

Describing the situation facing her family, Hayley said, "One of my sons is 23 years old and he has tried to get a job for a long time. He tried to get apprenticeships, even basic jobs. He can't get anything other than zero hours contracts. The agencies have people working and just before they reach the legal time for rights of employment, the employers take them off the books and rehire them again a short while later."

"Now we hear that 18- to 21-year-olds can't get Housing Benefit. Many of these young people will end up on the streets. One of my sons is 29 and he has to house share. It's social cleansing. There is no social housing."

"I was a qualified teacher, but the pressure was so great that I had to leave. It's all performance related. I worked with special needs and our school was taken over by an academy. We need something to happen now."



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