

UK students and young people speak on COVID pandemic, danger of war at NHS protests

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with students and young workers who attended protests this Saturday against attacks on the National Health Service (NHS). They spoke on NHS privatisation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing war crisis.

In Leeds, our reporters spoke to student Hannah, who said the privatisation of the NHS was “devastating”. It would cost people much more money, like in America, she said. “Everyone has the right to a healthy life, and if they are sick, the right to go to a doctor and get the medicine they need.”

She described having COVID and how this had worsened her asthma. “I had to go back on inhalers and start paying for them.” Having to pay nearly £16 each time was very difficult on her student income.

Asked about the events in Ukraine, Hannah said, “After we’ve had a pandemic, do we really need a war?” She thought it was “ridiculous” that vital funds needed in the pandemic were being used for military spending.

In Sheffield, reporters spoke to journalism students Siring and Bertha, from India and Nigeria.

Siring said, “The danger in Ukraine is actually of a fourth world war because I think that COVID has been the third world war... My father is a micro-biologist. He has been just like a soldier in this war. Every day, my family and I thought we could lose him at any time.”

She felt governments had treated health workers as expendable, saying, “There is no cost in the lives of health workers to any of the governments around the world. I feel that the working class is the biggest resource any country can have. The wealth is generated by the workers. It is the working class that helped the rest of us to survive the pandemic.”

Bertha said, “When the lockdown happened, there wasn’t any notice or assistance. It was just a news flash. We expected so much from the government; that they would help the low-income groups of people. The government made money during COVID by embezzling. While working people were sent to work to die. There is so much corruption. People began protesting but the government just ignored them.”

In Manchester, the WSWs spoke with Damien, a young worker, and Tal, a financial studies student, about the war crisis.

“Russia is engaging in some sort of expansion and that’s bad, but then the Ukraine isn’t necessarily 100 percent good as the government has worked with and cooperated with various neo-Nazi and fascist groups within their own structure. So, it’s ultimately the people who are going to be affected and losing in this. There is no real clear good side in this.”

Damien said Putin had made clear that he was hostile to the working class and had denounced Russia’s revolutionary socialist past. “It’s clear to me that he’s interested in having more power, and a buffer against the NATO expansion rather than actually being interested in the people of the Ukraine.”

“The working class is the majority, so the only way they can get anything that is in their interests is by acting in their own interests.”

Tal said it was important to learn from the past. “In Russia, everyone was involved in WW1 and WW2. The whole of Europe lost millions of lives, and now they are doing it again. They are not learning from their wars, and they are not learning from their past.”

Nobody benefits from war, he said. “Whenever you go to war you lose, whichever side you are on. Our

soldiers die, and your soldiers die. It's not the Prime Ministers, or big bureaucrats and politicians who are fighting. It's always us common people who live normal lives. We go to the wars, we get displaced, we lose our houses, we lose everything. The elite class have their bunkers, and big palaces to hide in. So, it's the elite class who benefit really."

"It's all about the oil everywhere, the Middle East, energy prices going up. They are pushing us to go electric, but who can afford that. I can't afford a petrol car, so how can I afford electric? If they want us to have electric cars, they have to increase our salaries or do something so that we can afford it."

Asked about the future, Tal replied, "It's dark, with the war and the pandemic. We will be having to tell our grandchildren what it was like during the wars, the horror of past war experiences, like people tell us now about wars in the past, and what they had to live through. We don't want to go through that either. We don't want war."



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