JOIN US in Manchester on Sunday 29 September!

Rally to defend our NHS

Join us on 29 September to tell the Conservative Party Conference we won’t let them destroy our National Health Service.

Supporters of the NHS and all those who want to defend jobs, services and a decent welfare state will be marching in Manchester to deliver a clear message to the Conservative Party Conference that we mean to Save Our NHS from cuts and privatisation.

The Tory Party meets in Manchester on Sunday September 29th and the TUC has organised a national demonstration. We in the North West need to take the lead in ensuring a massive turn-out on the 29th.

The protest will highlight the impact of huge job losses and spending cuts across the health service, as well as the rapid sell-off of the most lucrative parts of the NHS to private healthcare companies – many of whom, like Circle, are also Conservative Party donors.

The event will also raise concerns about the wider effect that government economic policies are having upon communities across the UK.

The rally will form up at Liverpool Road in the city centre from 11am and march off at 12.30pm. Going around the city centre the march will pass two sides of the conference centre giving people plenty of opportunity to raise the volume of our protest!

The march will end in a rally at Whitworth Park, starting around 2pm.

Further details are available on the union’s national website www.unison.org.uk. If you use Twitter and Facebook join in the discussion using #NHS999

GETTING THERE

Liverpool Road (M3 4FP) is off Deansgate. Look up in the sky and walk towards Manchester’s tallest building – the Beetham Tower – Liverpool Road is opposite its entrance. The nearest station is Deansgate. The nearest Metrolink is Deansgate/Castlefield.

March & rally outside the Conservative Party Conference

SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

Assemble 11am at Liverpool Road, Manchester City Centre.
Electricity North West members sign up to three-year pay deal

Electricity North West members have accepted a three-year pay deal effective from 1 August 2013. The deal gives an increase of 2.75% from 1 August 2013, a further 2.65% increase from August 2014 and 2.1% from 2015.

In addition, standby rates will be increased to £35 (Monday-Friday), £40 (Saturday and Sunday) and £250 on Christmas Day. The Meal Interference allowance will increase to £5.

The offer applies to ENWL and Construction and Maintenance Services Ltd (COMA) and is expected to be paid in October salaries.

Health – more than ‘just’ the NHS

As vital as the NHS is it is important to remember that ‘health’ is much wider than that. It is as dependent on the availability of decent housing and clean water and on controls on food outlets to avoid food poisoning as it is on availability of treatment for the diseases when that fails.

Historically the great reductions in mortality were first brought about by Public Health actions – for instance, outlawing hideous overcrowding in housing and providing proper access to safe drinking water.

And that is yet another reason that those of us from the NHS, will also remember to fight for our colleagues in Local Government, and against cuts in council and social housing provision, environmental health, street cleaning and all the rest. That’s why we continue to campaign in support of those colleagues in the long-privatised water and fuel industries.

Frances Kelly – health worker (who has worked in the NHS for 37 years!)

UKIP a disaster in waiting for Public Service workers

“I used to vote UKIP but I don’t now - I read their policies”

Members might be forgiven for thinking that a new party like UKIP should be given a chance or that voting for them will send some sort of message to mainstream parties. However, a mere glance at their policies should make any UNISON member think twice.

Nigel Farage has said he favours abolishing regulation for Britain’s small businesses, denying many millions of workers maternity rights, health and safety protection and employment rights. He wants a referendum - not to empower workers but instead to empower their bosses.

He has condemned the “soft” approach of the Tories on public spending: “The Chancellor is not cutting, we are borrowing £12 billion a month more than we are earning. We are not cutting we are increasing our national debt by nearly 10% per annum”.

Interviewed on the morning BBC News earlier this year he promised to abolish inheritance tax, and reduce taxes generally, and also claimed he would introduce real cuts to get the deficit down. When pressed, he came up with less than a quarter of the cash by cutting overseas aid (£11 billion) and cutting the £20 billion we contribute to the EU. Leave aside that much of this is spent back in the UK, but even if every penny of it was money to spend, this saves not enough to reduce the deficit by a quarter.

So how will he save the rest? “We need some serious cuts in the Quangos and some serious cuts in this massive growth of middle management that has grown up right through our public services".

He echoed his UKIP colleague Godfrey Bloom who said, “I hope hundreds, thousands of jobs will be lost... you will never understand UKIP until you understand this point. Public spending takes money out of the economy, it doesn’t put it in”.

Whilst Paul Nuttall, Deputy Leader of UKIP and North West MEP said of Labour and Tory claims to protect NHS spending, “Well funding will have to be reduced in the future. We know that. In the end, we will have to look at a different way of funding healthcare in the 21st Century". He also spoke of streamlining and failed to deny he supports major reorganisation.

Of course, none of this covers the point that cuts on this scale would ruin any chance of balanced growth in our economy and would increase the deficit through higher unemployment.

Meanwhile UKIP would go much further than the Tories on Employment Rights, ripping the heart out of Tribunals. They also prefer very short employment contracts.

It is vital our members hear the truth about UKIP. It is not wrong to question the EU, and many of our members will be sceptical. Yet in their worst nightmares, they would not support the kind of policies a UKIP-led Britain would impose on us.

UNISON Activists who want a more detailed explanation of UKIP should look at http://www.ier.org.uk/blog/ukip-workplace. This features a blog, “UKIP in the workplace” by Narmada Thiranagama, UNISON National Officer on the Institute of Employment Rights website.
September 29th –
Why we must all be there
The TUC demo on 29th September affects us all. All branches
need to mobilise members to attend. After all it was a major
decision of this year’s National Delegate Conference to have a
march at all. UNISON is leading on saving the NHS. It’s being
starved of funds, sliced up and flogged off to private firms. The
right wing hate it – they want to see an American style health
service where you have to take out insurance. We simply
can’t afford to let them get away with it. And if we can’t unite
to support the NHS what can we unite around? Other unions
and groups will be there protesting about austerity, fracking,
attacks on education and much else. The important thing is
we make sure there is a massive turn out. A poorly attended
march will only encourage the Tories to go further faster.

September 29th - What you can do
• Make sure you’ve got a supply of the HQ leaflets
• Organise a morning handing them out at your major
  workplaces
• The demo is on a Sunday. Check it’s possible to get to
  Manchester by public transport and publicise the times.
• Think of hiring coaches to get to the march
• Use Twitter and Facebook to tell your members
  (and the world!) about it
• Put it on your branch website
• E-mail your branch activists
• Make sure you bring your branch banner
• Come and have a great time on Sunday 29th!

Are you under 27?
If the answer is yes then you are classed as a young member. UNISON wants young members to play a full part
in union activities. At the same time we know for many young people it can be difficult getting time off work for
union activity, being taken seriously, or speaking out with confidence in a room full of older people who can give
the impression they know it all.

That’s why we have created a young members’ organisation in UNISON which is designed to:
✓ encourage participation; ✓ provide a voice for young members;
✓ give young members the chance to develop their skills and knowledge;
✓ support young members in becoming active in the wider union.

You can get involved at branch level by becoming your
branch’s young members’ officer. At regional level there
is a Young Members’ Forum, where you get the chance to
meet young members from elsewhere in the North West
and discuss your experiences and ideas. You also get to
plan young member activities and get support from other
members in the region. If you want to find out more or
would like to attend our next meeting on 4th December
2013 at 4.30pm, please get in touch with Victoria Walton:
v.walton@unison.co.uk or call her on 0161 661 6716.
NHS: Publicly provided or wrecking ball?

We keep hearing Nye Bevan’s quote that the NHS “will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it”. But the trouble is that can lull us into a sense of false security, while the NHS is demolished behind a deliberately constructed screen of smoke and mirrors.

The detail of what is being done to the NHS is so complicated that it is difficult to follow – which is just what the Government wants. But the essence is simple. It’s a piecemeal privatisation allowing the whole to wither. At first the NHS first becomes merely a brand name behind which private healthcare companies make a profit; then slowly the rest of our publicly funded and provided NHS can be gradually taken apart.

Already any of you seeking NHS treatment may well have been shocked by being referred to a private provider (it’s happened to me already – Ed).

Some people are pleased because they are told it will mean they are seen quicker. But don’t be fooled! Every referral to a private healthcare operator drains money out of the NHS – simply to pay the profits of the private firms. And let’s be clear. Private companies will both cherry-pick the easiest cases, leaving the NHS to cope with the most complex and expensive and sometimes they will also provide loss leaders, undercutting the NHS to get their foot in the door.

When the local NHS services collapse for lack of funding – the private providers are left to clean up – the money that is, not the work that is needed! And then, heaven help those who can’t pay for private care.

What to do:

• Be there on September 29th in Manchester City Centre.

• When seeing your GP, insist on NHS providers.

NHS 65th birthday celebrations overshadowed by threats

The 5th July 2013 marked the 65th birthday of the NHS and the event was rightfully celebrated at various locations across the region. The “birthplace” of the NHS, Trafford General Hospital was one such place as were Liverpool, Birkenhead and Bolton and no doubt many more.

The evening saw a TUC-organised event that looked towards making sure the NHS reached its 66th birthday!

The theme was of course the attack on the NHS principally through privatisation. For those who’ve read UNISON’s or Keep Our NHS Public’s publicity the speeches didn’t say much new. But I was pleased that a doctor, qualified only six years, and so with further career-moves at stake, expressed his disgust at the government’s remarks about immigrants and the NHS. He pointed out that the overwhelming experience of immigrants and the NHS is that the former have been propping up the latter.

Nye Bevan once wrote: “How do we distinguish a visitor from anybody else? Are British citizens to carry means of identification everywhere to prove that they are not visitors? What began as an attempt to keep the Health Service for ourselves would end by being a nuisance to everybody. The whole agitation has a nasty taste. Instead of rejoicing at the opportunity to practice a civilized principle, Conservatives have tried to exploit the most disreputable emotions in this among many other attempts to discredit socialized medicine” Nothing changes eh?

What’s also clear is that the Government and the right wing are engaged in a softening-up process highlighting and enlarging every single failure by the NHS. A consultant doctor, Ahmed Sadiq noted at the meeting that, “The present Secretary of State for Health is on record as supporting the American type model of Health Service provision - a system based on private insurance. “The Commonwealth Fund, which is a private American Company consistently ranks the NHS highly on a range of measures. It surveyed health services on how they deal with people with chronic and serious illness. It finds people in Britain have among the fastest access to GPs, the best co-ordinated care, and suffer from the fewest medical errors of the 11 countries it surveyed including France, the USA, Canada, and Australia. In fact it rates the UK NHS and the Swiss health service as the most efficient in the world”.

Frances Kelly
Liverpool celebrated the NHS 65th birthday with a cake from Liverpool Acute Hospitals branch and a demo by UNISON, Unite, GMB, the Socialist Singers and Keep Our NHS Public, with support from patients arriving at the hospital.

Spirits were high despite all the attacks on the health service. In the morning, the Liverpool Echo ran an advert from Keep Our NHS Public (KONP), part funded by UNISON. It spelled out the NHS we want and need, contrasted with the prescription we didn’t need.

Previously, the hospital and local politicians claimed PFI is “the only game in town”. Now the Trust is desperate to reduce the PFI component. It obtained a capital grant from the Department of Health for £94m and sought funds from the European Investment Bank.

But this is still a PFI scheme, and the money wasted on private finance with its higher interest rates could be better used to recruit and retain 130 nurses for 30 years.

PFI repayments will have first call on Trust finances, coming before clinical need even while the Government’s austerity agenda increases poverty and demand for healthcare.

If the Trust runs short of money, it has a “mitigation strategy”. This includes £54.9m to be recouped from hospital staff pay awards, Agenda for Change increments, overtime, sickness absence, and even a staff contribution from 2014 to 2020. It adds up to over £12,000 per staff member in all!

To top it all, the preferred bidder is Carillion, the construction firm deeply implicated in the construction “blacklist”, racist bullying and victimisation of healthcare staff in Swindon, deaths at a private surgical centre in Hertfordshire (now returned to NHS management), and involvement in several PFI schemes with major financial problems.

Liverpool City Council will consider the plans this month.

In Liverpool, The Royal is lurching towards a PFI (Private Finance Initiative) scheme to redevelop the hospital, despite reports from the Public Accounts Committee suggesting PFI is far from value for money. Hard evidence is also growing from PFI disasters in Whiston, South London, Peterborough and Wakefield to name but a few. UNISON has exposed and opposed PFI since the 1990s.

KONP recently published a critique of the latest plans, “Royal Liverpool PFI: A threat to our future” (www.labournet.net/ukunion/1308/royalpfi1.html)
Pride in our Public Services

UNISON North West LGBT group has had an active summer taking part in community events and pride celebrations in Blackpool, Liverpool, Manchester and Oldham and at Sparkle, the national transgender festival.

With our purple ‘UNISON campaigning for equalities’ T-shirts, we’ve engaged with members and potential members from as far away as Newcastle and Bristol, giving out information on UNISON, its services, and why it’s so important for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people to be in a union.

While people enjoy getting a free pen or lollypop, freebies give us a perfect opportunity to have a chat with people about whether they’re in a trade union, what trade unions do and on some occasions we even convince a new member to sign up there and then. But as well as potential members, people who are already members often drop by to have a chat about work, life, the state of the economy and generally just to say how nice it is to see us.

The committee decided to attend as many events as possible this year, regardless of their size, and many times we’ve been the only trade union represented at events.

As well as stalls, we also join in any pride marches, and this year, Liverpool Pride had a fantastic turnout, with a large inflatable UNISON balloon and our regional secretary Kevan Nelson also joining us. Not to be outdone Manchester Pride saw us driving a UNISON float as part of the parade. The season isn’t over yet, with Prides in Warrington and Chester still to come.

On top of that we’ve also worked with Liverpool Pride to produce a LGBT film festival throughout July, August and September. The film festival even branched out to the Light Cinema in New Brighton and the Plaza in Crosby, with more venues hopefully getting on board before the end of the year. With this year’s LGBT Conference being held in Liverpool, the group is confident that another recruitment award will be coming our way.

For more information on the UNISON North West LGBT group, including how to get involved, contact Janet Caulfield: J.Caulfield2@unison.co.uk.

Obituary: Cheryl Franklin, Electricity North West Branch

I realised I had not heard from her for some time. By then she had been moved from Oldham General to the Coronary Care Unit at Wythenshawe Hospital. She was quite ill but still maintained her usual care-free spirit. I never managed to get back to see her.

After Cheryl’s death in May, I received countless goodwill emails from members who she had helped and represented. They all wanted to pass on their condolences to her daughter Savannah and closest family and friends. No one could have predicted what an affect her death had on so many people. I for one think about her every day and the family she left behind who had to deal with not one funeral but two as Cheryl’s mother died on the same day after a long illness.

I am still in contact with Savannah, her legal guardian Natasha and Natasha’s husband. I am positive I will be friends with Natasha long after Cheryl’s loss is less painful. I can understand why she was Cheryl’s best friend growing up and during her adult life and why she entrusted her daughter’s future to her care.

As a steward and union colleague Cheryl was very active and always questioned why things were done in a certain way when we were in company negotiations, she brought a sense of balance to any proceedings by adding her own humour to the discussions.

I do, and will, miss her input and feel privileged to have worked with her as a colleague. I am proud to have been able to call her my friend.

Teresa McEntee
UNISON convenor
Electricity North West
Young members visit Cuba
By Ian Sutcliffe

I was over the moon when I was accepted to join the NW UNISON delegation on the Young Trade Unionist May Day Brigade to Cuba. This was the 6th time that the Cuba Solidarity Campaign organised two weeks of solidarity and celebration of the Cuban Revolution.

The campaign seeks an end to the 50 year blockade of Cuba by the United States. It is not just an embargo; America also blocks other countries from trading with Cuba.

We took part in different activities while in Cuba. One of them was farming. We spent a whole day piling up branches into a bonfire and another day moving large stones. It was very exhausting, physically and mentally. What would have taken an hour with a tractor took 30 people all day. But this is the point, Cuba struggles to make new vehicles or import them because of the blockade. Most cars and lorries are 1950s American vehicles. The Cubans have done very well in maintaining these vehicles for so long.

Another major industry is the health care industry. The Cuban health service trains doctors and nurses that go and work all over Latin America. Cuba regularly sends medical aid missions to tropical islands along the Equator and in South America whenever there is a natural disaster.

Cuba has a lot to give. Cuba may not have the oil or wealth of the United States of America but it has a heart for the poor; which is exactly what the capitalist countries elsewhere do not have. What Cuba has, it shares generously.

While in Cuba we attended a play performed by the school children, attended a street party and joined in the dancing! If any young members are thinking of going next year don’t go for the food: the food is poor. Take plenty of mosquito spray; take a torch and a raincoat. It rained once while I was there – we had a thunderstorm and a power cut. Take working boots, gloves and washing powder.

I would recommend going on a Brigade in Cuba to anyone, whatever age you are. There are Brigades for people of any age as well. Get involved – become an activist!

This is an edited version of Ian’s report the full version of which can be found at: www.unisonnw.org/young-members-report-on-may-day-delegation-to-cuba/
Rochdale rally in support of workers on 19th day of strike action

Members of Rochdale Branch employed by Future Directions CIC have been involved in strike action totalling 19 days over the last three months.

They were joined by branches from around the region on a march and rally in Rochdale Town Centre on Thursday, 29th August. The well-attended rally was addressed by UNISON President Maureen Le Marinel, and Head of Local Government Heather Wakefield, with messages of support for the action that they have been engaged in.

The employer, Future Directions, is a Community Interest Company owned by Calderstones NHS Trust. They are looking to expand their business and are aiming to bid for more contracts. Future Directions were awarded a contract by Rochdale Council in 2012 to deliver supported living services in Rochdale. In order for this contract to be viable Future Directions have cut workers’ pay. They have also attacked their terms and conditions. Many workers are losing more than £500 per month and having to use savings to subsidise their wage and make ends meet.

UNISON has attempted to enter into meaningful negotiations with Future Directions but there has been no positive movement to date. UNISON has requested further financial disclosure from Future Directions to enable a proper analysis of the rationale for the cuts to pay, terms and conditions for members. This is yet to be fully provided by the company.

One of the women now working for Future Directions began her role as a carer for vulnerable adults in 1989, now because of the cuts imposed by her employer she is earning less pay in real terms than she was 23 years ago!

The striking workers are dedicated carers who provide a vital service to the most vulnerable people. Many of the workers have been have been caring for the same service users for many years and having to take strike action has been a last resort for them. However, they feel that they have no other option and have to balance the needs of the service users with the need to provide for their own families. 80% of the Future Directions workforce are part-time women workers.

This is an important dispute – and not just for those in Rochdale. We really cannot allow the action to fail. The members need all the support we can collectively give them. Branches and individuals are encouraged to send messages of support.

More importantly the branch needs your money!

Send donations to the strike fund c/o Helen Harrison, Branch Secretary, to Rochdale UNISON, 46 Richard Street, Rochdale, OL11 1DU, or email unison@rochdale.gov.uk.

The branch thanks those who have already donated, and Regional Committee, which met on 3 September, urged branches to dig deep and send more!

Liverpool Black Members

Liverpool UNISON Black Members’ Self-organised Group has re-formed as a direct result of Liverpool City Council’s service reviews and redeployment measures disproportionately affecting its members.

The number of black members being made redundant or redeployed has led to the decline in the number of black employees to just 5.4% of the workforce.

Members of the group are pictured protesting on behalf of yet another black member being issued a compulsory redundancy notice. Sadly the member lost their appeal and was subsequently made redundant.

The Liverpool Black Members’ Group has since increased its efforts for equality and a representative workforce in Liverpool.

A full campaign of action to highlight the inequality in employment and selection for redundancy of Black people in Liverpool is currently in the offing. For more information contact Leon Mussa at: Ismail. Mussa@liverpool.gov.uk or call him on 0151-233-4770 Ext 4799.