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NewsWire

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Free Food, not Free Trade!

06.05.2006



On Saturday 6th May No Chains pitched up outside a well known no-union fast food emporium on Mill Road and gave away free food (and advice) to prospective customers.

This is to be the start of campaign to try and stop Mill road ending up looking like the rest of the city centre – and many others around the country – full of corporate franchises, as opposed to local businesses which keep the money in their community rather than exporting it from their host city for their CEOs' and shareholders' benefit only as multinationals do.

There was much interest from local residents, with 209radio coming along to interview activists and passers-by, as well as the action getting the support of Labour councillor Kevin Blencowe, who professes to be Old Labour!

One member of the Constabulary came along to investigate, but was happy for the action to continue as there was no major disruption to locals taking place, although Subway may beg to differ!

Many people helped themselves to the free homemade vegan snacks on offer, and signed the No Chains petitions, so all told a very successful start to what many hope will be a fruitful campaign. No pun intended.

The NHS in Crisis

11.04.2006

Crisis can be an overused word, but in the case of the NHS it's difficult to get across the scale of the problem without using it. Three quarters of

the NHS trusts in the UK are reporting that financial deficits are forcing them to make some form of cut backs this financial year.

But, hold on. The government says it's putting more money into the NHS than ever before. For once the government is telling the truth – they are spending far more on the NHS than ever, but the cuts are still taking place... how on earth can they both be true?

The answer is simple, it's not a question of how much money, but where it goes. Private companies have become more deeply entrenched in the health service than ever before, on a level that would have been unimaginable even under the Tories.

When the Tories began this process the idea was simple. If they were to sell off the NHS it was not possible to sell it in one piece, because there was no single company able to take on one of the largest employers in the world. Just like with the railways, by slicing the service into bite sized chunks they hoped to encourage potential buyers and promote competition between previous allies.

Work that may have previously been done by NHS employees, but was not directly healthcare related, like cleaning or catering, was often farmed out to the private sector, at greater cost, poorer service and far worsened working conditions. Outsourcing has now become the norm rather than the exception: work is consistently farmed out (under public procurement) to companies like Capita, whose boss Rod Aldridge gave a million pounds in 'loan' to New Labour.

Currently 25 NHS Trusts have foundation status, and their record is hardly inspiring, but it is not unsurprising that Trusts are running up record deficits when there are so many people taking their cut. For example, the cost of operations has increased by 9% purely on the basis that private companies have a greater involvement in their delivery.

One area of increasing costs has been drugs which accounts for more than 12% of the NHS budget, all of which goes into the coffers of the drugs companies.

The belligerent orthodoxy of the market, the idea of introduction of free competition and private finance has been revealed to be operating on an uneven playing field.

The implications for those who wish to resist further attacks has been that organising

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If you want to get involved, email imc-cambridge@lists.indymedia.org

campaigns and trade unions has become that much harder.

Take a hospital that may have once had at most two employers, now there could be six, each with different service conditions, each in different sectors. Bringing all these workers into one union branch is an obstacle that is often (but not always) insurmountable.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) recently commissioned a report that stated that "70 per cent of nurses say their trust is struggling to make ends meet. Nearly 40 per cent of nurses say wards have been closed at their hospitals in order to save money. And more than a quarter say they know of operations that have been delayed for financial, rather than medical reasons."

The official government figures say that the total deficit in the UK for NHS Trusts is £1.6 billion between 167 Trusts (Hansard) and this does not include official "efficiency savings" of £769 million already made this year.

Cambridgeshire has to find £32.2 million pounds of savings, even though the government "hit squad" admitted that there was nowhere that cuts could be made. Nevertheless the mental health services are now having to cut around £3 million from day services, Addenbrookes hospital has had to close at least one old people's ward and the small Newmarket hospital has cut 16 inpatient beds and the Young People's Service is facing a terrifying level of cut backs.

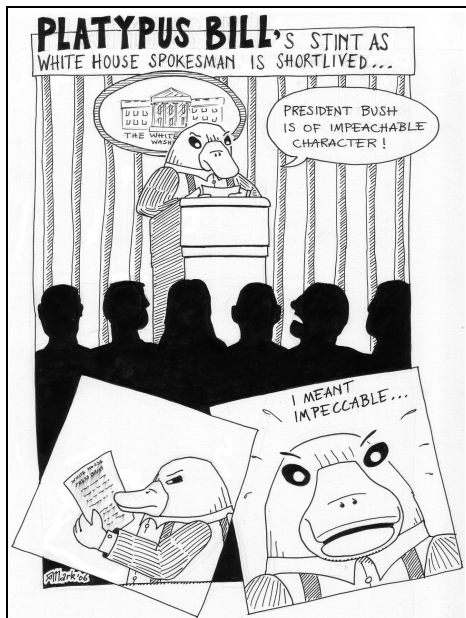
In Cambridge the campaign against these cuts has begun. There was a very successful demo in Cambridge in December, which was followed by a 'May Day' demonstration on Saturday 29th April.

NHS Trusts in the Cambridge area have resorted to selling off assets to pay off their debts but whilst the PCT might be able to find part of this year's £15 million cut, there is a further £23 million of cuts expected in following years and it will eventually run out of land and buildings to sell.

Interestingly the local Labour Party has begun to rail against those who are 'pretending that it is the government that is making the cuts. This is another fabrication. The Primary Care

Trusts which are responsible for the funding of the Mental Health Trusts received an 8.4% increase in their budgets from the government this year. They have overspent and have chosen to pass some of their deficit onto the Mental Health Trust."

So the Mental Health Trust has to reduce spending by £3 million pounds and it is not a cut? How silly of us to think so.



209radio awarded FM licence

21.04.2006

Ofcom, the UK communications regulator, has awarded Cambridge-based 209radio a five-year FM Community Radio Licence.

As part of the largest roll-out of radio stations seen in Britain, there are now 99 across the country serving local geographic communities and communities of interest. More are to follow in this first round of the process with a second wave soon to start.

209radio has been broadcasting via the Internet in Cambridge since March 2003 and has grown from humble origins. From a private living room serving the city's vibrant music scene to an organisation gearing up to serve all who work, live and study in Cambridge, 209radio is poised to make a real contribution to life in the city from new premises.

Founders Karl Hartland and Lucy Clifton say: "2006 has already been a fantastic year for us: an immensely successful 10 day FM broadcast in February, nomination for a New Statesman New Media award for the second year running and a move into new custom-built radio premises in the heart of the city. Now after a long wait, the efforts of hundreds of people and countless organisations, we have arrived!

"We are a community development organisation who happen to use radio broadcasting as our primary tool. We exist to provide support and training for our community to make programmes relevant to them, gaining skills and making friends along the way.

"Our main priorities are People, Music and The Arts and providing access to the media for those who may find it difficult to get their voices heard sometimes. We are going to be doing this in a beautiful, vibrant and sometimes complex city. long may we do so!"

Immaterial Labour Conference

Ed Emery of the Universitas Adversitatis organised the "Immaterial Labour, Multitudes, and New Social Subjects: Class Composition in Cognitive Capitalism" conference in Cambridge on the weekend of April 28-30th. This featured a large international gathering of radicals and militants, with a focus on autonomous inquiry in the digital era. It was to have included a keynote by Antonio Negri, co-author of *Empire*; however he was unfortunately unable to attend for personal reasons and this was given by his colleague Andrea Fumagalli instead.

This diverse revolutionary current believes that the era of the "material labour" of the factory has been superseded by the "immaterial labour" that includes unpaid family work, "service with a smile" and the production of affects, and symbolic-linguistic production such as computer programming and entertainment. There is also an increased focus on the cybernetic communications of both capital, and as opposed to vanguard parties, the natural antagonism of labour to capitalism and their ability to subvert their own machinery – including the Internet.

Cambridge May Day Weekend Round Up

03.05.2006



It was a busy May Day weekend in Cambridge. Starting on Friday, and continuing through to Sunday, there was the Immaterial Labour conference (see article, left).

On the Saturday there were protests about the privatisation of the NHS and other public services with a Critical Mass and a march around the city. In the evening there was a benefit gig for the Cambridge Campaign Against the Arms Trade.

On May Day itself, activists visited a supermarket to hand out tea and coffee to workers. In the evening there was the Wild Thyme Community Cafe, which this time raised funds for the Camp for Climate Action, taking place in northern England at the end of August.

Coming up

Sat 10 June: 3rd Annual Norwich Anarchist Bookfair – Blackfriars Hall, Norwich.

Thu 15 June: Leading US anti-war activist Anthony Arnove speaking at Waterstones, Sidney Street.

Sat 1 July: East Anglia Social Forum – Norwich.

26 August–4 September: Camp for Climate Action.

Links

209radio: <http://www.209radio.co.uk/>

No Chains: <http://www.cambridgeaction.net/nochains>

Immaterial Labour Conference:

<http://www.geocities.com/immateriallabour/>

Keep Our NHS Public: <http://www.keepournhspublic.com/>

Camp For Climate Action: <http://www.climatecamp.org.uk/>