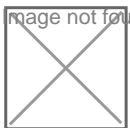


Tens of thousands in London march to defend National Health Service



London, July 4 (RHC)-- Marking UK's National Health Service's (NHS) 70th anniversary, a national health scheme that has strived to provide universal healthcare for all, tens of thousands of supporters gathered to defend the health scheme in central London.

Thousands of protesters also marched on White Hall to defend the NHS. Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, who was also part of the demonstration, said he would "go to the end of the earth and beyond" to defend it. Speaking to the crowds, the Labour leader explained: "We're here today on this amazing 70th birthday, here in Whitehall, yes to celebrate, but do we have the absolute determination that we will go to the end of the earth and beyond to defend our national health service?"

Protesters carried placards and banners reading "Standing together for the NHS" and "NHS SOS" as they marched towards the Parliament where politicians, TV stars and union leaders addressed the rally.

Jack, a Unison union member, the second largest trade union in the United Kingdom, told Socialist Worker, "We're here to show that we're not going to give up the fight. We had 49 come down on the coach, but we've still got a picket line up in Wigan to keep everything strong."

A retired nurse, Alicia who traveled from Oxfordshire to join the protest, told the Socialist Worker: "The NHS has been a massive part of my life. I was involved in the 1981 nurses' strike while I was a student nurse." She added: "The NHS needs a very good injection of money. They can do that by shaving off the top wages of senior managers – we don't need them, nurses can manage wards."

Critics believe that given the current economic state of the cash-strapped NHS, it could run out money within the next year. With demand increasing all the time, by 2021 the NHS will be over £30 billion short of what it needs to provide an adequate service, free at the point of use.

"It's not possible to have a £30bn gap," one senior NHS source told the Independent. "It has to be paid from somewhere – you would have to have emergency Treasury bailouts, which the Treasury would be furious about."

The rally organizers pointed out that government's recently announced funding boost was "simply not good enough" as protesters were heard chanting, "shame on you Tories." "It is a symbol of an uncaring and cruel and divided society that so many go through mental health stress, so many go through it alone, and so many, sadly, take their own lives.

I want to live in a society where we have a health service worthy of the name paid for by all of us, for all of us. It's called socialism. And I want to see the same principles applied in education and in housing," Jeremy Corbyn said, addressing the crowds.

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