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Throughout that time, many have descended into poverty, as is evidenced by the fact that over a quarter of NHS trusts are now running food banks for their staff. Most nurses can no longer afford childcare or travel costs and are opting for longer, more dangerous shifts to try to balance their books. Such has been the decline in real pay that today *one in three nurses cannot afford to heat their homes or feed their families*.

Clearly, something has to change. Nurses are asking for a 17.6 percent pay rise to set against this devastating decline, raising wages by 5 percent over *official* inflation (and let us not forget that real inflation is considerably higher than official statistics suggest, and is highest on the goods most relied upon by the poorest). This would by

no means make good all that has been lost, but it would go some way to addressing the poverty crisis now besetting our nurses.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt sheds crocodile tears and admits that there are “massive pressures in the NHS, with doctors, nurses on the frontline under unbearable pressure”, but at the same time says that the service receives a lot of money and “we need to do everything we can to find efficiencies”.

He forgets to mention that most of the funding directed at the bottomless bucket marked ‘NHS’ is actually being siphoned off as profits by the private sector; it is not paying doctors, nurses and cleaners, improving staffing levels or maintaining buildings. Nor does this efficiency-lover mention that the *most efficient* way to rescue the NHS would be to *renationalise* it, kicking out the privateers and running the service for the public good, not for private greed.

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consistent outcomes, higher life expectancy, lower infant mortality) than that of the mighty USA for less than a quarter of the cost.

Instead, Hunt tells the nurses off for failing “to recognise a difficult truth: that if we gave everyone inflation-proof pay rises, inflation would stay, we wouldn’t bring down inflation, and that’s why I’m not pretending there aren’t some difficult decisions.”

In reality, inflation is not caused by workers seeking to preserve the value of their pay, but by capitalist governments printing money to postpone the economic collapse of their own system of capitalist production for profit. It is further exacerbated by monopoly price gouging (witness today’s energy market).

Since the breaking up and privatising agenda laid out by our rulers in the 1980s has been followed religiously by Tories, LibDems and Labour governments alike, we can’t expect a solution via parliament. The only use Labour has made of its ‘pro-NHS’ credentials has been to take over and subvert the energies of various protest groups into channels that are entirely futile as far as *actually saving the NHS* is concerned.

The working class needs a decent health service, properly funded and staffed, whose employees are decently paid and supported in performing their essential roles.

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To address the cost of living crisis **WE DEMAND**

- Nationalisation of ALL utilities (without compensation) along with monopoly producers, manufacturers and distributors of food so as to ensure a secure supply of all necessities at affordable prices, free from the vacillations and disruptions of the world market.
- Requisition and building of social housing and introduction of a rent cap to address the housing crisis.
- Leaving Nato, bringing all troops and military contractors home, and ending all aspects of British involvement in aggressive wars abroad.
- Lifting the minimum wage to a level providing a decent family existence.
- Legislation for pay/benefit rises that keep pace with REAL inflation.
- An end to currency devaluation through endless money printing.
- An end to the self-defeating sanctions war against Russia, which is fuelling both the energy and the inflation crises.
- An end to all subsidies to monopoly corporations and banks. Any business considered ‘too big to fail’ or ‘necessary to the national economy’ that cannot make an adequate profit out of ordinary operations should be nationalised without compensation and run according to a plan based on meeting the needs of the people.

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