

# NEWS

For the millions, not the millionaires!

Newsletter of  
**Oxford Socialist  
Alliance**



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[www.oxfordsocialists.org.uk](http://www.oxfordsocialists.org.uk)

## Blair's attack on our comprehensive schools

Tony Blair's plans for education, a centrepiece of the coming General Election have been hailed by the right wing press as the "death of the comprehensive".

Labour's contempt was summed up in the insulting phrase "bog-standard comprehensives". Tory education spokesperson Teresa May complained that Labour had stolen the Tories' policy!

Labour now promises a big increase in the number of "specialist" schools, which will have powers to select up to 10 percent of their pupils. By 2006 almost half of all secondary schools will be "specialist" schools, and receive extra funding, creating a new 2-tier system.

Already under new Labour – and Education

Secretary David "read my lips: no selection" Blunkett – more children are being taught in selective schools than under the Tories.

Since schools need a cash pot of £50,000 even to apply for specialist status, it is clear that the most hard-pressed schools, especially those in more deprived areas, will remain firmly at the bottom of the heap.

This is a further kick in the teeth for teaching staff at comprehensive schools – smashing morale at a time when schools throughout Oxfordshire and the south east are already struggling to recruit and retain sufficient teachers.

To make matters worse, Blair also wants to encourage businesses and 'voluntary organisations' to take over failing schools and to see more religious-based

schools.

Socialist Alliance candidate for Oxford East John Lister said:

"People voted Labour in 1997 to bring an end to Tory policies in education, health and other vital services. Instead Labour has shortchanged the teachers on pay, demoralised them with a mountain of assessments, paperwork and ever-moving "targets", and worsened teacher shortages in a growing list of subjects.

"Now it is clear that Labour's second term would be even worse for education than its first."

"A vote for the Socialist Alliance is a vote to defend comprehensive education against selection, and for the increase in core funding and teachers' pay which are needed to get our schools up to scratch."

## Socialists to contest Oxford East



**JOHN LISTER, 51, a journalist who lives in Greater Leys will be the Socialist Alliance candidate for Oxford East at the coming election. John has worked 17 years as press officer for a campaign to defend the NHS, and has lived in Oxford for over 30 years.**

## Don't forget Further Education!

With over 4 million students aged 16 to 60, the Further Education sector is far bigger than our universities. But FE is the neglected sector, with per capita funding steadily falling, and Colleges run as self-standing corporations, often making cuts or imposing wage freezes to balance their books. Oxford's FE teachers had no pay rise at all last year, and FE salaries are around £3,000 lower than for school teachers.

John Lister says "As a part-time FE teacher myself, I know the pressure staff are under.

"Labour talks about the importance of FE in tackling social exclusion and promoting "Lifelong Learning", but without the cash. The Socialist Alliance demands proper funding and a big increase in pay to recruit, retain and support the staff required to deliver top-standard education to all."

## Socialists back Oxford student fees protest



Oxford Socialist Alliance was quick to lend public support to the recent sit-in protest by Oxford University students against tuition fees imposed by Labour. Speaking at the sit-in, John Lister said: "Like many of the present government I was lucky enough to

have a University education with no fees to pay and a grant funded through taxation.

"It is a scandal that New Labour has gone further than the Tories and imposed fees, and ending grants completely.

"The Socialist Alliance calls for the fees to be scrapped, and loans replaced by grants – funded by progressive taxation on high incomes."

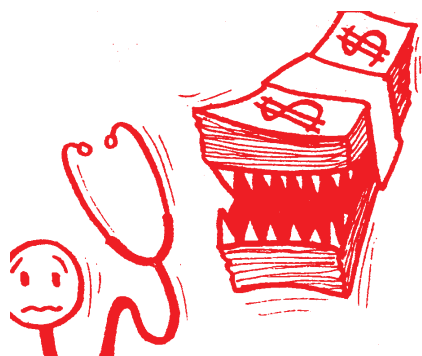
**Join the Socialists. Phone 07929 618579. Campaign meetings 7pm Thursdays, Oxford Town Hall**

# NHS: Why PFI could cost an arm and a leg

**GOOD NEWS:** the Churchill Hospital is to get a new specialist cancer unit. **BAD NEWS:** Just like the redevelopment of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, and almost all of the government's £3.5 billion hospital building programme, the £28m investment is to come **NOT** from the Treasury, but from private banks and big business under the so-called Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

This money is not a charitable donation, or a low-interest loan: it represents high-cost borrowing, a much more expensive way of building hospitals, which leaves the NHS as a tenant, and future generations of taxpayers footing the bill.

**MORE BAD NEWS:** the endless delays in the PFI procedure mean that the new cancer centre won't be built before 2006 – after the



**NEXT election!**

**WORSE NEWS:** The long-awaited relocation of the Radcliffe Infirmary to Headington, at an estimated cost of £71m, will also be financed through PFI.

**THE RESULT:** Oxford's NHS will be squeezed again to pay the price of renting buildings and buying more services from private firms, each of them making profits from front-line health care.

With big business taking the first slice out of the

Trust's budget, any further efficiencies or cash savings can only come from front-line clinical services.

**THE POLICY:** PFI was dreamed up by the Tories in 1993, but only implemented by Labour.

## IN CHARGE OF

**PFI:** Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Oxford East MP Andrew Smith.

**OPPOSING PFI:** the Socialist Alliance. John Lister said:

"PFI represents a major step down the road of a privatised NHS.

"16 years of privatised cleaning and support services have left hospital wards dirty, and food so inedible a new government task force has been formed to sort it out, headed by Lloyd Grossman.

"How much more evi-

dence do we need that the private sector is only interested in ripping profits out of the NHS?

"We say PFI must be scrapped. The Socialist Alliance is totally against the creeping privatisation of our health service."

## Then ... and now

### WHO SAID:

"The Tories have dreamt up a new scheme. They want to flog off the National Air Traffic Control Service. Labour will do everything to block this sell-off. Our air is not for sale." ?

Of course it was Andrew Smith, then just MP for Oxford East, at Labour Conference 1996.

Now he is Chief secretary to the Treasury, masterminding ... the flogging off of Air Traffic Control!

## Rail industry loses track

News that Railtrack is seeking a further £2 billion hand-out to help pay for the cost of the Hatfield train crash underline the nonsense of maintaining a privatised railway system with such massive government subsidies.

It is now clear that it would be cheaper for the government to buy back Railtrack, and take back the train operators' franchises than to keep propping up their balance sheets with public money while services go from bad to worse.

Public opinion, especially since the disasters at Ladbroke Grove and Hatfield has been strongly in favour of renationalising the railways: and this has been one of the

first campaigns mounted by the Socialist Alliance, with literally thousands of people queueing to sign our petition at Oxford rail station and Carfax.

Of course when we say renationalise, we don't mean handing back control to the same old BR management that ran down the railways before the Tory give-away privatisation. We want the railways to be planned and controlled by the workers in the industry, and accountable to the wider travelling public.

Nor should the shareholders receive a penny in compensation. They have already milked more than enough profit from the crumbling industry.

## Join the campaign for a Socialist alternative!

The Socialist Alliance is a new organisation, uniting the left, and standing 90 or more candidates across England in the next Election. Oxford Socialist Alliance welcomes support from anyone wanting to challenge the Tory politics of New Labour.

We already have backing from many union and community activists and campaigners. Help us make a difference!

Membership is just £2, but we obviously need donations towards our campaign and helping hands on the ground to give out leaflets and canvass the constituency. Just send in this form, ring us on **07929 618579**, or you can email us at:

**feedback@oxfordsocialists.org.uk**

### I ENCLOSE

- £2 to join the Socialist Alliance  
 £..... donation towards the campaign.

### I AM WILLING TO:

- Give out leaflets     Canvass  
 Come to campaign meetings  
 Help raise funds  
 Publicly endorse the campaign

Name .....

Address .....

Phone ..... e-mail .....

Position held (if any) .....

**Send to us at PO Box 315, Oxford OX2 9LQ**