

Day 9: Wakefield to Barnsley

Oh dear – poor Geoff Dunbar, one of our main sherpas took ill last night and has ended up in hospital. Being Geoff, he did not want to disturb anyone during the night, and feeling ill, got into the van and drove himself to the hospital where he was admitted with an infection. We are all missing him; the latest news is that he will be discharged but has to go home and rest. Hope he recovers soon and can join us later; get well soon, Geoff.

The organising team coped very well with this situation and we were able to get on our way to Barnsley after a great send off at Wakefield Cathedral. Once again the march attracted people from other areas, bringing their own stories- Enid Smith's son shared the story of his mother's death at City Healthcare Partnership CIC which has left the family traumatised. More and more concerns about privatisation of the NHS- the plans to privatise wholesale cancer services and the current Care UK situation in Doncaster with workers already on long strike, for example – does not make sense to the people anymore. As Ray Tallies pointed out in his speech in Barnsley, there is no mention of these fiascos; instead there is a systematic programme to destabilise and sell off the NHS.

The 'No more reorganisation' promised by Cameron has ended up as the biggest disorganisation, and one which David Nicholson described as the change so big that it could be seen from the space. So far it has cost £3 billion – guess where it could have been better spent.

The NHS is constantly being portrayed as not being fit for purpose despite the Commonwealth report showing it to be the best health system in the developed world- something that the SoS should be proud of and shout from the roof tops about, but instead the NHS is being undermined.

And the claim that Health and Social Care Act was not about privatisation can no longer be defended given the scale of contracts already awarded or in the pipeline, and TTIP yet to come (unless we manage to defeat it). Ray Tallis' quote about "outsourcing cancer services to the private sector, who themselves are like cancer to the NHS" drew a huge applause (albeit expressed with grave frustration).

A range of speakers at our rally in Barnsley picked up on these themes and shared further observations; the Freedom Riders struggle to retain free travel for the elderly and the disabled in Barnsley, for example, shows such contempt for due processes and our society and values that it left us dumbstruck.

Nye Bevan's "In place of fear" aspirations which led to the establishment of the NHS has become "Fear in place" as people become more and more afraid of what will happen to them and their loved ones.

Great day out today, with excellent weather and crowds. Started very well with wonderful breakfast with Cath and Pete, with their home grown fruits, talking about growing vegetables and fruit, and coping with wildlife, travels etc - all the things that are important in life. To some extent such conversations provide respite from the

constant 'fight' on the road, and also the resolve because if we don't sort out the NHS and the democratic deficit we will lose everything that is worth living for.

We walk and we talk... and there are great stories. Like that of Geoff, a teacher from Huddersfield who is going to run 9 each of- 10k races, half marathons and full marathons- his version of 999 call for the NHS. So there are many ways to show support – get in touch via <http://999callfortheNHS.org.uk/>

And we find out sources which can help... see <http://nhap.org/> for more information, and facts which show how people are being misled.

And we find people who share concerns and are trying to do their bit- like the Darlimum and Ealing Councillor, Aysha Raza, and we talk about whistleblowers esp Sharmila's case in Ealing. Hope that Aysha will write to Sir Robert Francis and help us with improving staff safety.

After a great rally in Barnsley had a wonderful meal at the Hospital- eating in hospital restaurants brings back memories, and I can not help but indulge in the sponge and custard pudding (loved it, obviously not as good as my wife's). I do, however, wonder what is going on and how patients cope, and what a shame that we have commercialised everything, I really resented paying £1.99 for the smallest toothpaste tube. Sign of times...

Sleep well, my fellow travellers, and wellwishers. I will – unless Tone snores; we are sharing a room but hey it is better than floor in a hall!



Ray Tallis

Cath (next to me) and Pete

The Stockport marchers



Aysha Raza

Geoff's 999 initiative



£1.99 for this baby... lesson learnt

Rajan Madhok

24 August 2014

DECLARATION: I am walking in personal capacity and the views expressed are mine alone, and are meant to inform not criticise or insult. If you like them, tell others and if you do not, tell me- just kidding, but do help me with my prejudices/arrogance. I may be old but can still learn. Blogs available at www.leadershipforhealth.com