

Dear

Re: Andrew Lansley's Health and Social Care Bill

I believe this Bill will destroy the NHS as we know it. Unless there are substantive amendments at report stage, I hope you will vote against it at third reading.

The debates are scheduled for the 6th and 7th of September, immediately after the House resumes following the summer break. After the listening exercise and the government response, 180 amendments were tabled. The reconvened Bill Committee finished on 14.7.11 so there was scant opportunity for MPs to read and discuss the new amendments published on 17.7.11, when Parliament was due to rise. I still have serious concerns about the Bill.

Mr Lansley's stated aims of reducing bureaucracy, giving clinicians more control and putting patients at the heart of care, with which all would agree, can be achieved without legislation. So one has to ask why this complex bill is needed. I believe that its aim is to set up a fully fledged commercial market. My four main concerns, which remain after the pause and the new amendments, are:

- The duty of the Secretary of State to provide a comprehensive health service has still not been restored and lawyers are arguing about the meaning of the new clause. Why not revert to the 2006 Act (based on the 1946 Act) which has served us well for 63 years? The Bill committee discussed this issue for ninety minutes and the minister did not explain why the government would not do so.
- The question of our NHS being subject to European Competition Law is complex, but the risk of this being applied to the NHS if these changes go ahead is real. The Department of Health refused to show their legal opinion to Professor Steve Field, chair of the Future Forum, who led the 'listening exercise' but reassured him. Do we want EU competition law involved in our NHS?
- The Role of Monitor as an economic regulator has not significantly changed, nor has the proposal that it should have a duty of collaboration (as recommended by the Future Forum) been included in the amendments.
- The Royal College of GPs has pointed out that – rather than reducing bureaucracy – the amended Bill would increase the number of statutory bodies from under 200 to over 500, greatly increasing the complexity of the NHS structure. These changes are likely to cost more money rather than less.

Surveys show that the English people do not want the NHS turned into a market. They will not forgive any party which destroys the NHS. You have a chance to redeem yourselves in the eyes of the electorate after the tuition fees debacle. Your party has tried hard to amend the Bill, but, as Mr Lansley has reassured his backbenchers that 'no red lines have been crossed', the amendments are cosmetic not substantive. Please vote against the Bill when it returns to the House. As Nuck Cleg said 'No bill is better than a bad bill'.

A poll conducted by Yougov Cambridge after the listening exercise on 1.6.11 found that 21% of the sample said they would be less likely to vote LibDem if these changes went ahead, against 6% who said they would be more likely to do so. The remainder were committed to a party or did not express a view. You can see the full poll results at www.yougov.polls.cam.ac.uk.

I would like to come and see you to discuss this further unless you let me know that you do intend to vote against the Bill at third reading

Yours sincerely,

(one of your constituents)