

UK politicians gain from privatising National Health Service

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Social Investigations, an independent news blog offering research on political matters of social interest, has compiled an extensive list of British MPs and members of the House of Lords who are set to gain from the ongoing privatisation of the National Health Service.

As this year's Health and Social Care Bill was being debated and voted on in both houses, more than 200 parliamentarians held financial interests in businesses involved in private health care.

Hedge fund boss John Nash, chairman of Care UK, has over the past five years donated £203,500 to the Conservative Party. Back in 2009, it was a donation by Nash of £21,000 that helped fund Andrew Lansley's "personal office"—from 2010 until this week, health secretary in the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition.

Last year, some 96 percent of Nash's Care UK's business, amounting to more than £400 million, came from public money channelled via the NHS. City firm Sovereign Capital, also founded by Nash, runs a string of private health care firms.

Lansley was also sponsored by other players in the health care industry. In 2008, he received a donation from Julian Schild used to support his office in his capacity as shadow secretary for health. Julian Schild's family made £184 million in 2006 by selling hospital bed-maker Huntleigh Technology.

Lansley's wife, Sally Low, according to a February 2011 article by the *Daily Telegraph*, is the founder and managing director of Low Associates. Her company web site boasted pharmaceutical companies SmithKline Beecham, Unilever and P&G among its clients. This information was swiftly removed amid her insisting that her company does not work with corporations that have an interest in the health sector.

Social Investigations highlighted another influential Tory donor as Nash's business partner, Ryan Robson. To date, Robson has donated a total of £252,429 to the Tories, £50,000 of which was given to position himself as a member of the party's "Leader's Group", a cash-for-access club.

Back in 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron, shortly after taking office, gave private care home tycoon Dolar Popat a peerage. Lord Popat is reported to have donated £209,000 to the Conservative Party. Of this figure, £25,000 was registered as a donation a week after the Tories' health reforms were unveiled.

Fellow Tory Lord Ashcroft has also gained from the government's NHS recruitment freeze. Over the last three years, his company Medacs has benefited to the tune of £7 million by providing agency staff to cover the 28,610 jobs lost as a result of Lansley's ban on NHS recruitment.

The Labour Party has its own ties to private health care. McKinsey & Co, which drew up many of the proposals finally accepted into the Health and Social Care Bill, paid David Miliband, Labour MP for South Shields and brother of the current Labour leader, Ed Miliband, £10,000 in February 2010 for a speech at a Global Business Leaders Summit. This was the same year that he was positioning himself for the leadership of the Labour Party in a contest lost to his brother. In March 2011, he received a further £10,044 from the same company for travel expenses and accommodation in Singapore.

Alan Milburn, the former health secretary under Labour, was a consultant for Alliance Medical's parent company. Alliance Medical runs diagnostic services for the NHS, including in Birmingham and Falkirk. In 2008, his registered parliamentary interests highlight that he was a member of Lloyds pharmacy's

Healthcare Advisory panel and was paid in the region of £30,000.

Also in 2008, Milburn was a member of the European Advisory Board of Bridgepoint Capital Limited, the private equity firm that acquired Care UK.

Labour's Lord Peter Mandelson was also registered as late as May 2012 as a senior advisor to an international advisory investment bank known as at Lazard Ltd, which holds corporate interests in private health care.

Since 2004, the Liberal Democrats have received donations to the tune of £440,000 from Alpha Healthcare Ltd. In 2010, the year they entered into coalition with the Conservatives, £125,000 was donated to fund Nick Clegg's party by Alpha Healthcare. In 2004, the director of the company, Bhanu Choudhrie, made two donations of £10,000, and a further £20,000 in 2008. His father, Sudhir Choudrie, in 2006 made donations totalling £95,000. This donation was gratefully received by the Liberal Democrats, despite several cases being filed by the Confederation of British Industry alleging his use of manipulation and bribery in defence purchases.

These are the politicians the trade unions insist can be persuaded to turn away from privatisation and preserve the NHS by applying a little moral pressure.



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