

PCS INDEPENDENT LEFT

Fighting for fair pensions

ALL OUT ON 30th NOVEMBER!

30th November will be a great morale booster for trade unionists and wider sections of the working class. Even more schools will be closed than there were closed in June; even more civil servants will be out as Prospect and FDA join PCS on strike; council services will be hit this time; health workers will be out; NIPSA will be pulling out its members in Northern Ireland; workers will be on strike the length and breadth of Britain.

We can defeat the Tory led coalition's attack on public sector pensions. Income inequality has reached levels not seen since the 1920s but the Tory led coalition claims we are all in this together and that ordinary public sector workers should pay for the deficit with our pensions. Our answer is, "Let the rich pay."

The picket line, and the demonstrations that follow, will be joyous places to be on 30th November. Make sure you are there!

What happens after 30th November?

As we all build for that day of cross union action, we should ask the question, "What Next?" Rank and file members across the trade unions need to debate how the pensions dispute will be won; what would constitute a pensions victory; and how we ensure that the leadership of the various unions do not use the pensions fight as an excuse for accepting year on year cuts to our real pay and the loss of a huge number of jobs, including by compulsory redundancies.

All and every action necessary to win

The PCS Independent Left believes that 30th November should be quickly followed up with further action to sustain and increase the pressure on the Tory coalition. A one day strike over public sector pensions will not **force the Tories into unconditional surrender on pensions**. They are up for the scrap of making workers pay for the economic crisis, which is why they are now planning to attack union facility time in the public sector, make workers pay for lodging legal cases with the tribunals, and make it easier to sack workers, extending the qualifying period for employment protection to two years.

We need the maximum action possible – further national action, rolling strikes coordinated with other unions, paid selective action, further national demonstrations, mass public meetings, and the establishment of cross union rank and file town and district committees. The PCS leadership needs to end its long period of hostility to paid selective action as one of our tactical weapons. We need to use all weapons in our armoury – whatever it takes to win.

No to another reserved rights deal

"Winning" should not be seen as yet another public sector reserved rights deal that will preserve the pensions arrangements in place for existing public sector workers at the expense of future workers. Such arrangements – and there are already tens of thousands of civil servants who will have to work until they are 65 to obtain their pension under the last reserved rights deal – will see the longer term erosion of civil service pension arrangements, create divisions amongst the workforce as new staff are placed on worse terms, and leave existing staff vulnerable to divide and rule tactics.

For an effective union – join Independent Left

We should not have to pay more and work longer for less in retirement and neither should new recruits. We have to defend what exists – and restore RPI as the inflation measurement for up-rating pensions - with a view to establishing a single civil service pension scheme on the basis of up-rating to the best provisions.

Reaching out to private sector workers

The public sector unions should be demanding that the government – and Labour – commit to reversing the hooligan destruction of private sector workers' pensions schemes by the same bosses who have preserved their own almost unimaginably generous pension arrangements.

PCS must champion the unity of public and private sector unity and, with other unions, challenge the terms of the current pension debate.

The pension debate

We need to move beyond the politics of sectional defence – necessary as it is at the moment – to society wide solutions to the pension crisis confronting workers in Britain. The scandal of women's low pension entitlements (due to breaks in employment, part time working to look after children and other dependents, and lower paying jobs) and the widespread poverty in old age must be addressed by fundamental pension reform and substantial increases to the state pension (reducing claims on other benefits and increasing dignity). A cap should be placed on the pension levels of private sector executives and top mandarins (former DWP boss Richard Mottram walked off with a £300,000 lump sum and a £100,000 pension). A more equal society is a healthier society.

Jobs & Pay

The ballot mandate PCS currently has is not just for pensions but also for action on jobs and pay – all were on the ballot paper. But in reality the leadership is nationally focussed only on pensions. Now defending our pensions is vital but so is staying in work and thereby continuing to accrue pension entitlement. We don't want to pay more for our pensions but we also need to stop the year on year decline in real wages. For example there has been a 16.6% decline in the real value of the DWP EO maximum in London in the last 7 years. It's a similar story in other departments, grades and pay areas.

The NEC needs to start campaigning for national membership action on jobs and pay. The prospect for such action may or may not be great at the moment but it certainly will not happen unless the NEC starts to genuinely connect all the issues. It needs to demand a halt to all drives to redundancy and a freeze on job cuts, especially in the light of the worsening economic situation and a meaningful job protection agreement.

The cuts are not some part of the natural order which just happen to us (but not the rich). The crisis was not of our making; we didn't get any of the spoils; and we shouldn't have to pay the costs!

How to Join PCS INDEPENDENT LEFT

If you want a positive voice for members, creative solutions to the critical issues facing us, and honest accounting not spin, You should join the **Independent Left** – a socialist voice for members in the Union. To find out more simply fill in this form and give it to an IL rep or send to:

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