

## All out 20 March, Walk out 5 April

PCS Independent Left welcome the decision to call strikes on 20 March and 5 April, and the intention we are told, for more to come. We have long argued for a programme of disruptive and sustained action necessary to defend our members' terms and conditions, improve pay and protect jobs. We hope that along with action across Groups, sections, branches and beyond that the union can build the momentum needed for a real fight with a Tory led government. Any action taken will no doubt inspire members of other unions and put their leaders under pressure to co-ordinate a joint struggle against a programme of cuts that is hurting all working people.

We warned that the PCS leadership should not make a fetish of joint action and have sadly seen a whole year wasted due to the demoralisation of the 2011 pensions sell-out. While PCS' leadership were not directly responsible for this, pointing the finger at the leaders of the other unions has not and will not win any disputes. Now the PCS NEC appear to have woken up to the fact that we have to be prepared to fight alone as the alternative is not to fight at all. Better late than never.

So what demands are we fighting for? The focus, despite mention of jobs and pensions, at present appears to be on pay – around our claim for 5%, or £100 a month. Whether or not the leadership believe this is winnable or the opening gambit in getting 'talks' is a question that needs to be answered. 5% is of course winnable- if we are serious in how we go about it. Again we ask what about national pay bargaining- a return to one set of negotiations for the whole civil service? This is something the PCS Independent Left has argued for years and not just to remind the current leaders of their pledges before they defeated the old right wing.

One of the reasons that civil service pay has eroded so significantly is that it was broken up into over 200 'bargaining units' and the fight to unify these has been left on the back burner for far too long. As a starting point PCS should be advertising to members, repeatedly and in the most imaginative ways possible, the differences in pay between people doing work of equal value to make them aware of the great disparities in pay across the civil and public service; to get across the idea of the "going" rate for each grade - the best being the benchmark; if you are not paid this rate then you are being underpaid.

The government and their media lackeys will counter pose our 'unreasonable', 'unrealistic' demands to the need to protect jobs. They will accuse us of greed while private sector workers suffer. This is hypocrisy and lies. The civil service has been massacred; almost 64,000 jobs have gone since the last election. Civil service pay- which is largely worse than similar roles in the private sector- has fallen by 7% since 2008 and is to be cut by £7 billion a year until 2015- money that could have been spent in an economy that has shrunk. Meanwhile the super-rich have had their tax bill cut year after year -with corporation tax now almost half that of the USA! - giving the lie to the claim we are 'all in this together'.