

# PCS INDEPENDENT Left

A New Voice For  
The Members

**In the five years since it was elected in 2003, the Left Unity/Democracy NEC has failed to deliver one material gain on pay to members, has not succeeded in reducing the number of delegated pay bargaining units, and has not succeeded in moving us one step closer to national pay.**

## “The Mark Serwotka Test”

Is this too harsh? Certainly not if members apply the “Mark Serwotka test.”

In a personal election message to all union members in 2000, Mark Serwotka said of his election rival, “**Hugh Lanning has been in a position of leadership at a time when our jobs have come under unprecedented attack and our pay has declined compared to other sectors.**” That was not unpleasant or personally nasty – it was an attempt to weigh the record honestly in an electoral contest. Members are entitled to apply the same test to the current PCS leadership.

To paraphrase Mark, the current ruling group on the NEC has been in a position of leadership at a time when our jobs have come under truly unprecedented attack and our pay has been cut in real terms in 2006 and 2007 and is heading for more of the same in 2008. This huge setback follows the admission in 2005 that “**...low pay in the sector is continuing to worsen thanks to Treasury pay caps...**” (May 2005 PCS View).

Amazingly though the current leadership does not even admit to the slightest doubt about its performance.

## Spin

The Left Unity/Democracy NEC has spent years boasting about the mere fact of pay talks and over-hyping what might be on offer. Thus in 2005 the leadership said, “**We have persuaded the Government to introduced a fairer, more coherent pay system...**” Did you notice the fairer, more coherent pay system in place since 2005. No of course not; that is because the claim was untrue; that is because the claim was spin.

## A new breakthrough?

One of the current boasts of the Left Unity leadership and the NEC is that it has “**Achieved the first national pay negotiations in 15 years to address massive inequalities in pay.** Talks are ongoing with progress being made that can result in real improvements for members” (Left Unity NEC election leaflet on its website).

The claim is typical of the emphasis the NEC places on “talks” (as its only pay achievement to date) as opposed to real improvements in our members’ all too often low and unequal pay.

## JOBS

Whilst welcoming the improved jobs protocol we recognise its limitations. Remember our campaign was for a non compulsory redundancy guarantee. The protocols are a long way short of this. Of course having such a guarantee does not stop the job cuts; it just means that the cuts are handled with less pain. The Union has to start to properly campaign against the cuts themselves rather than in reality argue about how the cuts are managed. Therefore please support the emergency motion from DWP Sheffield on Jobs.

**Wednesday 21 May, 7 pm Friends Meeting House, Ship Street**

**Conference Debate: Privatisation, Low Pay and War – Who should workers support?**

**Alex Gordon (RMT), Derek Wall (Principal Speaker, Green Party), Natascha Engel (Labour MP, NE Derbyshire)** *Natascha was elected as MP for North East Derbyshire in 2005. Since then she has sat on the Work and Pensions Select Committee and has worked with local union branches on campaigns against the impact of staffing cuts.*

## Are these the first national pay talks in 15 years?

**NO!** The NEC has held 5 years of utterly fruitless National Framework and then Coherence talks.

## Do we now have (the first) national talks to “address massive inequalities in pay”?

**NO!** The utter lack of report back to members on these negotiations makes it difficult to judge what is going on. But clearly any claim that the inequalities of delegated pay has never before been raised and discussed with the Cabinet Office/Treasury is nonsense (or an astounding confession).

In truth, no leadership can guarantee success. However that does not excuse the chronic misleadership of the current NEC. For instance:

- the carry on in 2006 that saw the NEC oppose the preparation and ballot for a national campaign (including a call for a clear industrial action strategy) set out in a motion that sought the implementation of the 2004 decision, quickly followed by the NEC belatedly realising that many members would have their real pay cut that year;
- the lack of preparation in 2006 and 2007 for a national pay campaign (in fact the **conscious** rejection of preparation);
- the NEC launching (lurching?) into a national campaign with no idea as to what it would do after the January 2007 one day strike, and in consequence calling one more national strike day on 1<sup>st</sup> May and then abandoning further action for over a year to date, and at a time when, if anything, even more members suffered below inflation offers;
- the failure to give serious feedback on the national talks to pay negotiators let alone members but instead issuing misleading ballyhoo about coherence followed by "we've not achieved our reasonable demands" followed by we're calling off the national pay campaign for national talks - "a breakthrough" apparently but with no sign of the minimal demand for a cost of living increase being met.

## So what would the Independent Left do?

Whilst trying everything possible to have a common pay fight with other public sector unions (which the current union leadership wants as well) we would prepare for a long, hard campaign.

The union leadership's standard practice up to now is a one day national strike followed by months of inactivity. Unlike the Left Unity Leadership, we see a role for selective action in the union's tool kit. We want as much mass action as possible but also selective action as well.

By selective action we mean taking out key offices/sections for short periods; long enough to hurt, short enough so as to prevent the employer from setting up a mechanism to work around the action. In fact it is clear from the NEC emergency motion that they are moving away from a one day strike now and then. The emergency motion talks of other forms of action – particularly targeted action, coordinated in specific groups or business areas. We agree with this new emphasis on flexibility. However, they have done so before and not delivered. The NEC motion also is silent on overtime bans. We recognise that it will be hard to enforce and win but many parts of the service now operate on overtime; we should cut off that supply of labour.

Of course selective and other actions require money. Independent Left supporters have argued for many years for an all members' voluntary levy. Our vision is that members, and members from other unions who wish to see the successful defence of the public sector, would be encouraged to set up standing orders for say £1 a month (more if it could be afforded) and that over time would build up a war chest.

Allied to this we would have much more legal action; more equal pay cases, more judicial reviews; more race and sex cases concerning unfair and discriminatory reporting.

Today, delegates should support motion **A13** for a new strategy on pay.

It is our belief that the Union (which has an income of tens of £millions) can be more effective than it is now. To be so requires a change of leadership and tactics. If you are interested in being part of this change please contact please e-mail [pcsindependentleft@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pcsindependentleft@hotmail.co.uk) or talk to those handling out this leaflet.

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