



## THE 2008 NATIONAL PAY AGREEMENT AND THE FIGHT FOR NATIONAL PAY

### **Leadership Claim A “Breakthrough”**

“It’s not a victory but it is a breakthrough” was the PCS High Command’s summary explanation for calling off the 2008 national pay dispute.

### **Not A Single Demand Met!**

But a breakthrough *is an attack that penetrates the enemy’s defence*, often a precursor to victory. A leadership that calls off a pay campaign without even one of the six national pay demands being met has not penetrated the enemy’s defences.

Despite the Government rejecting all of our demands, the PCS High Command managed to spot a “national pay agreement” in Gus O’Donnell’s 1 December 2008 letter. For his part, you will not find any suggestion in the letter that he was offering a pay agreement. Below RPI awards continued to be imposed in the 2008/09 delegated pay round, discriminatory performance related pay remains a key feature of pay arrangements, members are still carved up into 200 divide and rule “bargaining” units, and pay progression continues to come out of the annual pay review pot.

### **For Honest Accounting**

The PCS leadership launched a very necessary dispute but without sufficient preparation or a clear strategy, and after years of pay spin and on/off “national pay campaigning” – all reflected in the ballot result. They then desperately suspended action on the midnight hour of the strike without anything on the table and eventually called the campaign off, still with next to nothing but spinning the O’Donnell letter into something it wasn’t.

### **The Leadership And Public Sector Pay Policy**

The leadership’s claim that the “national pay agreement” shifted the government from its 2% public sector pay policy was simply misleading. Yvette Cooper, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, had already disingenuously said “there is no 2% limit” in her 5 September 2008 letter to the TUC; that is, 19 days before the PCS pay ballot had even begun. At that time, the NEC rightly dismissed Ms Cooper’s meaningless words, only to seize upon them as a way out of the pay dispute when repeated by Gus O’Donnell in his December letter.

**Wednesday 20 May, 5.45pm, Friends Meeting House, Ship St**

***Into the recession: PCS and the fight back.***

Join the Independent Left in a thorough discussion of the issues facing PCS members and the wider working class. What are the big issues? Is PCS ready to meet them? How can we best prepare? Does PCS need a political voice? Is Make Your Vote Count sufficient or inadequate for the challenges ahead. Come along and share your views.

To find Ship Street: turn left out of the Conference Centre and continue along the sea front to the third street on your left.

### **Efficiency Gains**

The NEC claimed, “**when efficiency savings have been identified, they can now be used for improving pay...now there is access to new money...which could amount to many millions of pounds.**” (our emphasis). Again the claim was misleading. According to O’Donnell, the use of efficiency savings will be “**exceptional**”, “**on a case by case basis**”, “**in support of significant workforce reform**”, “**consistent with the government public pay policy**” and “**will need to recognise the implications of the challenging economic circumstances on public finances**” (see <http://www.johnmoloneyfordeputygeneralsecretary.org.uk/11.html>.)

It is clear that in 2009/10 many, if not most PCS members will not benefit from efficiency savings and PCS’ key national demands will continue to go unmet. After 2009/10 Treasury intend to claw back some of the efficiency savings before they can even be considered for pay. The NEC’s suggestion of “access...to many millions of pounds” was outrageous. In many a bargaining unit members will not have access to a single penny of efficiency savings and that was entirely predictable.

### **Testing The Pay Deal**

For its part, the NEC claims that we need to test whether the “agreement” delivers increased pay to members. But a real pay agreement would not be needed to be tested to find out if it delivered pay increases! It’s taken the current PCS leadership six years to get us to this “breakthrough”...and national pay remains as far away as ever.

### **Chickens Coming Home To Roost**

The chickens have now come home to roost with the Treasury’s 2009 pay review remit guidance. This has been described by the leadership as “unacceptable” because it assumes that the average base pay rise will be around 1.5%, takes no account of the cuts in living standards suffered in 2008, is less than the 2.3% pay settlement MPs have awarded themselves, and less than most other parts of the public sector. They might have added that it also takes no account of cuts in living standards for tens of thousands of members in 2007 and 2006.

### **Where Now?**

Nobody will easily put right what the current PCS leadership has put wrong on national pay. Nevertheless serious activists will recognise that “testing” the “national pay agreement” in 200 divide and rule bargaining units cannot deliver national outcomes. National pay, an end to poverty pay, equal pay, proper pay progression and an end to discriminatory performance related pay, can only be won for all members by a united national membership campaigning as one body. If we are to make progress the leadership must stop spinning, provide honest, timely, detailed reporting of negotiations, and devise a coherent national strategy that will enable PCS to punch its national weight, supplementing any national action with paid targeted and selective action, imaginative political campaigning and a step up the in legal challenges for equal pay.

#### **JOIN THE PCS INDEPENDENT LEFT**

If you are tired of the spin and the failed tactics of the NEC, then join the **Independent Left** – a socialist voice for members in PCS, one with creative answers to the real problems facing members.

To join simply write to:

[pcsindependentleft@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pcsindependentleft@hotmail.co.uk)

or send this slip to: PCS Independent Left, 112 Findon Street, Sheffield S6 4QP

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