



For an effective union – join the Independent Left

The Blair/Brown Government has slashed tens of thousands of jobs in the last few years. Many thousands have left on “voluntary” redundancy or severance to avoid travelling large distances and incurring large additional costs. Others have quit because they have had enough of stressful working conditions for not very rewarding employment. For those of us who have stayed, workloads and stress have gone up as pay has gone down.

For years Independent Left supporters have argued that seeking protection against compulsory redundancy is correct but not enough. We have argued that PCS needed an effective national jobs campaign to at least halt or substantially lessen the jobs cull.

The NEC has not agreed. Unsurprisingly therefore, its sole achievement is the welcome but over-hyped jobs protocol. Essentially the protocol is a cross between standard civil service pre-redundancy measures and the ACAS guidance on redundancy – welcome but not sufficient when jobs are still being slashed through “voluntary” measures and far from meeting the national claim for “**adequate resources and decent working conditions.**”

Whilst the NEC was shouting the glories of the improvements to the protocols, indicating that it would spend £100,000 on balloting members for approval (who would vote not to be consulted on job loss and redundancy?), Gordon Brown got on with planning further job cuts. **On the 14th May he announced that he would reduce the civil service to its lowest number since 1945.**

But on this basis **the NEC has effectively declared the national campaign on jobs to be at an end** and that it has decided to focus on pay: “We have now reached a national agreement with the Cabinet Office which provides members in the civil service and related bodies with improved protection from compulsory redundancy. Whilst this is good news, the vital issue of civil service and public sector pay remains unsettled. We now need the same unity, commitment and determination in our campaign for fair and equal pay.”

Gordon Brown in job slashing mode does not feel in the least inhibited by the strategy of the PCS leadership – any more than he does when in pay cutting mode. He has moved from a 2% pay policy to 2% multi-year deals and, having cut real pay in 2006 and 2007, is promising more of the same for 2008 and 2009.

The Independent Left has long been in favour of a single “remit” claim against the Treasury i.e. the Union nationally asks the Treasury for sufficient money to fund (1) real pay increases, (2) movement to national pay rates, (3) a significant reduction in the number of delegated bargaining units. We have argued that the key membership issues should be tied together into one campaign and for the Union to be much more vigorous in its use of equality law. Our ideas have not been taken up by the NEC, which has failed to deliver us one jot closer to national pay.

In all of these Government attacks the civil service's “equality policies” have counted for very little indeed - in fact the employer has pursued policies that have disproportionately and adversely impacted upon women, ethnic minorities, disabled staff and so-called “junior grades”.

For A New Direction In The Union

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Representatives and activists have to ask themselves, "is this as good as it gets or is there a better way of dealing with the employer's attacks?" The Independent Left wants a membership led union, championing membership interests, strong on policy delivery rather than self-glorifying, windy leadership rhetoric.

Our supporters:

- Have delivered some of the best pay, terms and conditions in the civil service;
- Have delivered 30 days annual leave on entry across a number of bargaining units, providing the basis for other areas to do the same;
- Have uniquely delivered Staff Handbooks that explicitly incorporate agreements with the employer into contracts of employment;
- Initiated and resolved the legal case that established the Crown as the employer of all civil servants;
- Initiated the DWP campaign for a fight back on jobs with a decision to ballot in London whilst the DWP leadership fiddled as jobs were slashed;
- Initiated the legal campaign to compare pay rates across civil service bargaining units;
- Initiated key and now commonplace PCS equality policies, (for instance, the equality proofing of all personnel policies - started in DETR by our supporters; challenging discriminatory distribution of box marks - started in DTLR by our supporters and resulting in a Whitehall-wide study of discrimination in appraisal systems; legally challenging discriminatory PRP);
- Have been central to the current legal challenge seeking to force DfT to carry out a Departmental wide equality audit as opposed to separate audits in each of its bargaining units;
- Formulated the policy for Departmental pay as one way of significantly reducing the number of delegated bargaining units;
- Were absolutely central to Mark Serwotka's election in 2000 against the opposition of every faction in PCS (including the Left Unity leadership who, until the midnight hour, supported Hugh Lanning).

If you agree with our analysis and are objective enough to recognise our achievements then join the Independent Left!

To those who say, "you should have stayed and fought in PCS alongside us", we reply – let us see you fighting in Left Unity for a different leadership and different policies and working with us around the policies that will deliver for members.

For A New Direction In The Union

JOIN THE PCS INDEPENDENT LEFT

If you are tired of the spin and same old strategy of Left Unity, and opposed to deals that offer new members worse terms on entry, You should join the **Independent Left** – a new socialist voice for members in the Union.

To join simply write to: pcsindependentleft@hotmail.co.uk
or send this slip to: PCS Independent Left, 112 Findon Street, Sheffield S6 4QP

Name: _____

Address: _____

Branch: _____

Email: _____

Visit our website at www.independentleft.org.uk