



## PREPARING PCS FOR THE BATTLES AHEAD

### **Trying To Make Us Pay**

The snout in the trough politicians and their big business mates intend to make us and other workers pay for **their** crisis.

The Tories have proclaimed their hostility to the public sector's final salary schemes. New Labour voices are whispering similar messages. The Lib Dems are demanding a review of public sector pension schemes, having announced in advance that that such a review must find ways to make the schemes cheaper. Brown wants to significantly reduce the benefits of the civil service redundancy scheme as he prepares for a big round of job cuts. The parties vie with each other as to who will most quickly and extensively slash and privatise the public sector.

### **Secret Talks On The Compensation Scheme**

And PCS? For some six months the PCS leadership has been in essentially secret talks with the Government on the future of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. The NEC has reported next to nothing to members about these talks. But, if the NEC does not know that a membership kept in the dark is a membership that will not be easily mobilised, Ministers and Mandarins certainly do. Only after Brown announced his intention to cut the cost of the Scheme (i.e. our benefits) did the NEC start to put a little information out.

The indications are that the Government will hypocritically seek to justify slashing benefits on the grounds that they discriminate against younger staff. This is the same Government that fights any claim for equal pay with all its might and that has spent years ignoring the way that PRP discriminates against ethnic minority staff, disabled staff and the more "junior" grades of staff. Of course, if discrimination was the Government's real concern it could improve the benefits for younger employees. But its real intention is to sack us as cheaply as possible.

### **PCS And The Pensions Threat**

Similarly, the NEC has been relatively passive in the face of the latest pension threats. One key reason for this is that at the time the 2004/2005 pensions dispute was settled the NEC assured members that it had secured a pensions "guarantee" for them – essentially that meant they would remain members of the PCSPS final salary pension scheme, and retain the right to retire at 60, for all their working lives. We argued that it left us very vulnerable to attack on a divide and rule basis as over a not very long period the service would be increasingly composed of staff who could not retire before 65 without financial penalty and who did not belong to a final salary pension scheme.

### **Pay Debacle**

The NEC's passivity, lack of confidence, and lack of any idea as to what it should do in the face of these threats is not surprising. We have had six years of failed leadership on national pay, culminating in last year's pay debacle in which our six demands were abandoned for a "national pay agreement" that will prove worthless to many thousands of members. The PCS NEC is not the kind of leadership that will successfully deal with the coming attacks in the biggest capitalist crisis in many decades. We need a different leadership.

**For A New Direction In The Union**

## For an effective union – join the Independent Left

### **For A Transformed PCS**

In the coming battles with the Government, PCS should be lead at the national officer level by officials who in are touch with the pressures on members – the very point Mark Serwotka made when he first stood for General Secretary in 2000 and stressed that he lived on DWP national EO pay, lived with the same problems facing members, and vowed to take a salary much closer to theirs.

Independent Left members, who were then mostly in the Socialist Caucus, agreed with that broad position and delivered Mark the nominations that got him on the ballot paper. We still agree with that broad position. We do not think our members should be paying salaries of over £75k to the Deputy General Secretary, over £80k to the General Secretary, and other unusually high salaries. Trade unions should not be a smart career move for people who would like to have a “nice conscience” but want to live a very much better life style than the members they represent.

### **Join Us**

So what to do? We urge you to consider joining the Independent Left in the fight:

- To make the NEC acknowledge the scale of the severance and pensions threat and prepare the campaign now. There are over 5 million people are in the public sector pension schemes – an industrial force to be reckoned with. When you add in their families and friends we have a potentially significant political bloc - a bloc that can make politicians take notice.
- To prepare PCS members by honestly and promptly telling them of the threat to their pensions and severance terms.
- To warn members of the accompanying threat to jobs and the desire to sack them on the cheap.
- To end the NEC and senior official culture of spin. Spin demobilises PCS members, undermines trust and confidence, and hardens the employer’s stance, as ministers and bosses see that officials are desperate to sell not very good deals.
- To seek unity with other public sector unions whilst preparing to fight alone with a strategy that is considerably more coherent than the NEC’s usual once in a blue moon one day strikes (if they are not called off at the last minute).
- To build rank and file unity across the public sector unions;
- To transform PCS into a membership lead union that champions membership interests and does so by electing its negotiating officials and paying them a salary in line with the members.

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

If you are tired of the spin and failed tactics of the NEC join the ***Independent Left*** – a socialist voice with real answers to the major 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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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