

Fight on Pay and Jobs, as well as Pensions

Monday 20th May

Pay

Pay is the litmus test of any trade union leadership. Under the current leadership living standards have been slashed. Over the last seven years the value of the max in each grade has risen by 5%, due to successive policies of pay freezes (ie cuts in real terms) and pay restraint (increases capped at 1%). Don't forget that PCS policy is that the max is the rate for the job. Prices, according to the RPI measure of inflation, have increased by 20.8% over the same period. This means that your pay has been effectively cut by over 15% over the past period. Progression has been effectively abolished in DWP.

And in all of this time we have had a Left Unity leadership at DWP level. With the economy flat lining, there is every reason to believe that the 1% pay cap will continue. Even if Labour get elected there is no reason to believe that this will change. Labour support the Coalition policy of capping public sector pay increases.

Composite motion A181 should be supported but it is vital that the terms of the motion are implemented, particularly in relation to the instruction in the final paragraph around industrial action. The motion includes a range of industrial action tactics including paid selective action. Nothing should be ruled out.

Industrial action strategy

It appears that the leadership have taken note of members and branches who said we need more than the occasional one-day strike, punctuated by months of inactivity, if we are serious about defending members living standards and terms and conditions and start winning concessions from the government. At last May's PCS conference, the Independent Left proposed the following policy:

“(PCS should) seek to build and maintain public sector trade union unity in defence of our respective pension rights whilst insisting on PCS's right to fight as an independent union in defence of its members and without having to wait many weeks and months for other trade unions to join us in action (and of course recognising the right of other unions to do likewise). We should seek to take action with as many unions as possible but this should not be a pre-condition for taking further action. PCS should go it alone if no other unions are prepared to strike over this issue.”

Instead, the NEC (effectively the same people that run the DWP GEC) argued that PCS could not take on the government on its own and win, when “winning” is never defined. But it is possible to take on the government on your own and win concrete victories, such as the 43 compulsory redundancy notices issued to staff over Christmas being withdrawn on the back of a successful strike ballot across the Group. We welcome the fact that the leadership have now accepted our position. It would have been preferable if this would have been done in May but better late than never. We have argued for years that we need a voluntary levy of members to fund paid selective action. This should take place **alongside** national strikes and overtime bans.

Visit our website at www.pcsindependentleft.com

Jobs

We have seen a year on year decline in jobs whilst our workloads continue to increase. The introduction of Universal Credit, dubbed Universal Chaos, means even greater insecurity for our members and is bound to result in even further job loss. We support the approach taken when 43 of our colleagues were issued with compulsory redundancy notices. It was correct to ballot all members across the Group. This should be our de facto position when anyone in DWP is issued with a compulsory redundancy notice.

Welfare reform

It's not just public sector workers who are being asked to pay for a crisis we didn't create. Benefit claimants are being targeted with a 1% cap on annual increases. We should make common cause with claimants. The coalition are using the ongoing financial crisis to reduce social costs so that when capitalism recovers the social bill for the bosses and the state will be much smaller. In short they want to make the rich, richer and the poor, poorer.

PCS, alongside other Unions, should organise active, visible campaigns, demanding the reversal of the cuts and a working class emergency plan to increase social revenue by taking the vast wealth of the banks into public ownership taxing the rich and big business, closing tax loopholes and cutting military spending. Any single one of these measures would free up enough money to fund decent pensions for all workers, address the sharp decline in workers living standards through substantial pay rises and restore the benefit cuts and expand welfare provision.

Unions must go on the ideological offensive against government and media propaganda to divide us into workers and shirkers. Our class needs a joined-up project to counter the joined-up project of the bosses and the government which serves them.

Victimisations

We applaud the members in Sheffield branch for the stand they have taken in defence of Lee Rock. We need to be absolutely clear, when any of our reps are victimised management are doing so not because they dislike certain individuals, they are doing it to attack our organisation. PCS is the only barrier that stands in the way of what management and the government want to do. With cuts and attacks on our terms and conditions due to intensify we can expect more of this. We need to make sure that we respond accordingly on each and every occasion. We urge delegates to unanimously support motions A114 and A131.

Fringe meeting – Monday 20th May

Campaigning against welfare reform and building solidarity between claimants and workers.

Come along and join the discussion. All welcome.

Speaker from the Benefit Justice Campaign
Speaker – Tony Reay, London regional secretary

**6:30 pm at the Friends Meeting House, Ship St., turn left out of the conference centre,
third turning on the left**

Independent Left presents...



Club Caucus 2013

Tuesday 21st May, The Caxton Arms, 36 North Gardens BN1 3LB
Tickets from the usual suspects