



Workers' Liberty

Civil Service Bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • awl@workersliberty.org • 0207 394 8923

Sustained action can win



We are on strike today over the issues of pay, pensions and terms and conditions.

The Tory-led government's successive policies of pay restraint and pay freezes have seriously eaten into our members' living standards over the past years. Members face another hike in pension contributions this April with a further, final, increase in April 2014. With the economy flat lining, we should expect Osborne to make further announcements about public sector pay restraint, benefit cuts, and a generalised class war on the poor.

Today's strike marks, according to the NEC circular, the beginning of a programme of action over the next three months. As well as today's action members will be called on to walk out of their workplaces at 1pm on Friday 5 April. On top of this we are implementing a three-month overtime to commence from tomorrow, as part of the action short of strikes that members overwhelmingly endorsed in the ballot.

This is to be welcomed, as it appears that the leadership have listened to members 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, which Workers' Liberty members are involved in, 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 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. There are 43 staff in DWP that will attest to this.

They were issued compulsory redundancy notices over Christmas.

Continued overleaf

Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist organisation active in the British labour and student movements, fighting for a working-class, socialist alternative to capitalism and Stalinism. Our members who are civil service workers are active in the Independent Left grouping within PCS. We believe in rank-and-file control within trade unions – union members democratically directing the union's activity from the workplace level upwards. For more information, see our website – www.workersliberty.org – or email awl@workersliberty.org



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DWP members voted for Group wide strike action and the notices were withdrawn without even having to go on strike. This may look like a small victory but it is not insignificant to those 43 workers that faced redundancy.

Had the NEC accepted that it was possible for PCS to fight on its own back in May, we could have done the necessary preparation work for an earlier strike, and ensured we had a more convincing ballot result, particularly around the issue of pay.

What we now need is the establishment of a voluntary levy across the union to fund selective action in business-critical areas to supplement national strikes.

We have been arguing for this approach for years. That is why, as part of the Independent Left grouping, we are standing with our allies in the Independent Socialists a slate of candidates for the NEC this year. We want to put our policies direct to the members.

Check pcsindependentleft.com for more information.

PCS Independent Left NEC candidates

President: Christine Hulme

Vice presidents: Marjorie Browne,
John Moloney

NEC: John Anderson, Steve Bennett, Nick Bird, Tom Bishell, Marjorie Browne, Len Campling, Sue Catten, Trish Doran, Chris Hickey, David Jones, Rhys Martin, Karen Johnson, Bev Laidlaw, John Moloney, Sin Ping Leung, Declan Power, John Pearson, Dave Putson, Tony Reay, Matt Wells

Benefits workers must support claimants

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, restore benefits, and expand welfare provision.

Unions must go on the ideological offensive against government and media propaganda to divide us into workers and shirkers. The unions, particularly those that are affiliated to Labour, must also demand that the Labour Party commits to total opposition to the cuts and to their reversal if elected in 2015.

Our class needs a joined-up project to counter the joined-up project of the bosses and the government which serves them.