



Right to be striking: don't let New Labour make workers pay for the bosses' crisis!

Workers' Liberty bulletin for 8 and 9 March civil service compensation strikes

WE ARE RIGHT TO BE STRIKING

Congratulations to every single striking PCS member! The government's attack on our severance terms is the latest attack on civil servants – on our jobs, pay, pensions, terms and conditions. If the union had just rolled over then, for sure, it would not be too long before a further attack on pension and severance terms came our way. The Government, and the Tories, want to sack us on the cheap when they slash public services. With worse voluntary and early retirement terms we will be cheaper to sack; more likely to see compulsory redundancies (because far fewer people will stick their hands up for the reduced voluntary terms that will be on offer); and we will be easier to privatise when all the main parties are looking to flog off parts of the state sector (because the cost of transfer to the private sector will be lower). Our severance and early retirement terms are a protection against both job loss and, in the event of it happening, against the consequential financial hardship. We are right to be striking!

DIVIDE AND RULE

As with pensions, Ministers and Mandarins have simultaneously sought to justify its attacks by reference to the "unfairness" to those in the private sector whilst at the same time effectively arguing that we will still be relatively "quids in". It is a fundamentally dishonest argument. Severance/early retirement terms are being seriously worsened and references to the private sector do not alter that fact.

It is a divide and rule ploy, designed to isolate civil service trade unionists, encouraging private sector workers to focus on low paid fellow workers rather than on the bosses who continue to enjoy huge salaries, enormous pension pots, golden hellos, and golden goodbyes. The Ministers and Mandarins who have now discovered the plight of private sector workers refused to take one step to protect the pension rights of those workers as they were rolled back in one attack after another by private sector bosses. They only pretend to care about private sector workers to browbeat us.



The government has tried to stereotype us all as toffs in bowler hats, with gold-plated pensions. But its ordinary civil service workers (and all workers!), with crap pay and conditions, who New Labour actually wants to pay for the bosses' crisis.

What about workers in the Nuvos scheme? PCS must fight the two-tier workforce!

By a PCS young members activist

The union has focused mainly on the adverse changes proposed to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. But of course tens of thousands of staff, members of the inferior Nuvos pension scheme, are only entitled to statutory minimum redundancy payments. This dispute is also about eliminating the two tiers of redundancy terms, and levelling up – but the union has kept pretty quiet about it.

To undermine the strike, senior managers have written to all civil servants, with four examples "showing" that staff will not be that much worse off under the new proposal. But the letter has nothing to say concerning those in the Nuvos scheme; this implies that those staff members are still entitled only to statutory minimum redundancy payments. The two tiers continue!

PCS, under its Left Unity/Socialist Party leadership, has a bad record of accepting the bosses dividing the workforce – symbolized by the scandal of the two-tier pension system which they have presented to us as a victory. We need to demand a leveling up of terms and conditions across the civil service, starting with equal pensions and compensation provision for all.

MONUMENTAL HYPOCRISY

The hypocrisy really is monumental. At a time of grotesque inequality in British society Ministers, Mandarins, Tories and others discover that the real inequality is between overwhelmingly low paid and not very well paid civil servants and workers in the private sector!

The truth is, however, that over the last thirty years Britain has become and remained one of the most unequal societies in the economically developed world. In September 2008 former Independent on Sunday Editor, Peter Wilby, pointed that "Over the past five years alone, the average earnings of chief executives of FTSE-100 companies have doubled to £3.2m. Their pay has been rising five times faster than their employees'. The top 1 per cent of the population now enjoy 23 per cent of national wealth, while the poorest half share a mere 6 per cent."

The recent Government commissioned report, "Fair Society, Healthy Society", found that people living in the poorest neighbourhoods in England, will, on average, die seven years earlier than people living in the richest neighbourhoods with an average difference in disability free life expectancy of 17 years.

The report explained, "...the higher one's social position, the better one's health is likely to be...Social and economic differences in health status...are caused by...social and economic inequalities in society..."

Most civil servants are at the wrong end of this grotesque inequality – along with millions of private sector workers.

- Full-time civil servants had median earnings excluding overtime or one off bonuses of just £22,850 in 2009, with many earning a lot less. This compares to the £200,000 plus salaries that were paid to ten senior officials last year; the £285,000 Gus O'Donnell was pulling down; and the £195,000 (at least) paid to MoJ's permanent secretary in the financial year to 31 March 2009; (an increase of 11.5 per cent on the previous year).
- The average annual pension paid to a retired Civil Servant last year was £6,700 (and the "average" overestimates what most people get). This compares to Sir Gus O'Donnell's pension pot of £2.09m which, if he had to convert it into an annuity, would fetch an annual £145,000.

- In line with wider society health inequalities, the Whitehall Studies show that morbidity and mortality rates in the civil service are in sharp inverse ratio to grade. Gus O'Donnell and his chums will simply lead longer, healthier lives than the rest of us.

We are not to blame for the economic crisis in Britain and we are not some privileged caste. We should defend our severance terms and make links with other workers to build a fight back.

Vote Independent Left in the 2010 NEC elections

The Left Unity/Socialist Party leadership of PCS has talked tough while failing to fight effectively against the government's attacks. Independent Left stands for a democratic union that really fights for its members, and for a cross-union working-class fightback against New Labour and the Tories.

President: John Moloney; Vice President: Marjorie Brown.

NEC: Nick Bird; Marjorie Brown; Sue Catten; Chris Hickey; Christine Hulme; Rosie Huzzard; Karen Johnson; Martin Kenny; Bev Laidlaw; Gerry Lyons; John Moloney; Theresa Raftery; George Thompson; Annette Wright.

www.pcsindependentleft.org.uk

What is Workers' Liberty?

This bulletin was produced by PCS activists who are members of Workers' Liberty.

Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist group. We stand for a fight to rebuild the labour movement from the grassroots, so that working-class action can overthrow capitalism and create a socialist society which meets human needs, in place of capitalism's 'need' for profit.

We are active in the unions, in anti-cuts campaigns, in the student movement, among climate change activists and in many other movements and campaigns.

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In the general election we will be standing a candidate against New Labour deputy leader Harriet Harman. For more see **www.workersliberty.org/election2010**

Where there is no socialist candidate, we support a Labour vote, linked to a fight for the unions to oppose the Brown leadership and impose working-class policies like taxing the rich to rebuild public services and scrapping the anti-union laws. We want the labour movement to fight for a workers' government, a government that serves our class as New Labour and the Tories serve the bosses and the rich.

See **stopthetoriesandfascists.wordpress.com**