

# An open letter to Mark Serwotka

Dear Mark,

When you ran for general secretary of the PCS in 2000, and we worked closely with you on your campaign, a major plank was that you would take a worker's wage for the job, rather than the sort of fat-cat salary received by your predecessor Barry Reamsbottom.

You did not just promise the PCS members that you would pursue left-wing policies as and when possible. Until recently PCS had a right-wing National Executive and few such policies were possible. You defined yourself as a genuine workers' representative in deeds, in immediate personal commitment, not just in promises for the future.

That commitment marks you out from all the other "awkward squad" union leaders, who talk like militants but take salaries like bureaucrats.

The policy is even more important if we are standing candidates as workers' representatives in the Euro-elections. However well those candidates do, they will not get the European Parliament to implement socialist policies. Many voters are not even sure what the European Parliament does. They do know that Euro-MPs get huge salaries (due to be £72,000 a year) and lavish expenses.

But the organisers of this conference have opposed calls for "Respect" to commit itself to workers' representatives on a worker's wage. What do you think about that?

Those who examine such things closely can see that, although you are speaking today, you have not signed the "Respect" platform. Those who read carefully can look at the puff you gave to *Socialist Worker* and see that, strictly speaking, it does not endorse "Respect" as a valid working-class political voice but only expresses a hope that it *might become* that.

"Working class people... desperately require a political voice. New Labour by its actions has abandoned them. I very much hope that the Respect coalition can become the political voice that these people need".

But for the casual reader you are endorsing "Respect". "Respect" as it is, running for the euro-elections on a platform which makes no reference at all to supporting workers' struggles and workers' unity across Europe, confining itself to assuring you that it is against "xenophobia" (as if the real xenophobes will even know what the word "xenophobia" means).

It is in the public domain that you are unhappy about the role of George Galloway in "Respect" and about the coalition's anti-euro policy. But not very public. It is publicly known only because Socialist Alliance chair Nick Wrack reported it at a Socialist Alliance Executive meeting.

For the general public you appear simply to endorse "Respect". Indeed, many activists have taken your presence today as the proof that "Respect" has the support of significant trade-union forces outside the immediate circle of the SWP. Without you on the platform, there would be no such "proof".

Endorsing "Respect" means endorsing George Galloway. He is not just an incidental. He was announced in the press as the coalition's lead candidate, for the London euro-constituency, before the coalition itself had even been launched.

And endorsing Galloway means endorsing the Socialist Alliance's move to dump what was its first commitment in its "priority pledges" for the 2001 General Election — workers' representatives on a worker's wage.

Who objects to the "worker's wage" policy? Whom are the conference organisers afraid of losing if they push such a policy? You? John Rees? Linda Smith? No. George Galloway is the only leading figure in the coalition who is on public record stating that he has "no time" for the "worker's wage" policy and he "need[s]" £150,000 a year to "function".

The policy has been dropped, not because the "Respect" membership is broader and more conservative than the PCS's and prefers to be represented by the well-off, but in order to get just one personality on board.

As you know, we would not want George Galloway on board even if he'd give the whole £72,000 a year to the movement. His political links with the Saddam regime in Iraq and his financial links with Saudi Arabia and the Emirates disqualify him.

At the "Respect" meeting in Oxford on 19 January, you said that we need to re-establish independent working-class political representation — but told the audience they should "make compromises" to do it. You did not say which compromises. Is being silent about Galloway's record on Iraq one such compromise? And about the "worker's wage", too?

To the old Stalinist excuse that you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, socialists have replied that we could see the broken eggs — but what omelette? We can see the compromise. But where's the working-class representation?

Yours in solidarity,

***Alliance for Workers' Liberty***