

SOCIALIST APPEAL



PCS BULLETIN

PCS CONSULTATIVE BALLOT DEFEND PAY AND CONDITIONS – VOTE YES!

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PCS Marxists

Over the last two years, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) has been at the forefront of fighting to ensure that workers' lives are put above profits in the pandemic.

The union, representing civil servants and outsourced departments, has led many struggles in the trade union movement, culminating with the heroic dispute at the DVLA offices in Swansea last year.

We have made it clear that we will not let the government get away with its scandalous contempt towards public sector workers.

Cost of living

PCS members have been doing essential work throughout the past two years, keeping vital services running. In many cases, we have risked our health to ensure that furlough was administered, Universal Credit was sent out, and other countless services were delivered where they were needed.

Now, with the worst of the pandemic behind us, the focus shifts from safety to pay and conditions. The government has clapped for us and called us 'key workers'. But what do we get now? Nothing but a slap in the face, that's what.

After another year of pay freezes, civil service workers are estimated to get a below-inflation pay rise in the next spending review. As a result, the average PCS member has now lost £2,300 annually since 2011.

In the meantime, our shopping bills are on the increase, with inflation running at a 30 year high. National Insurance payments are facing a 10% increase, and our energy bills will rise by as much as 50% after the price cap is lifted in April.

In this context, the 10% pay rise that PCS is fighting for is more than achievable.



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And so is the demand to get our pension money back, as on average we are losing over £600 per year.

Mood of anger

There is a clear mood of anger about pay levels amongst PCS members. This needs to be channelled through our union.

It is the duty of all PCS advocates and reps to speak to the members, engage with them, and urge them to vote Yes in the consultative ballot.

Meetings should be organised and held urgently in order to drum up support. And we should aim to organise all those enthusiastic about the campaign as reps and activists who can spread the message further.

Many currently feel powerless about their depreciating living standards. But a resounding declaration of war against this situation on the part of PCS will inspire thousands upon thousands of members to mobilise behind their union. This will be the platform upon which we can achieve victory.

Such a mobilisation can then be carried through to a national ballot for strike action. The impact that such a move could have – not only amongst the PCS membership, but on the whole trade union movement – is enormous.

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Unity in action

It is important to note that workers across other sectors are also feeling the squeeze more than ever before. Our brothers and sisters across the trade union movement, in both the public and the private sector, are beginning to move to defend themselves against the onslaught.

The task is clear. The conditions workers face today are not confined to this-or-that industry or sector, but hammer our class across the board.

Our longstanding policy of coordinating action with other unions – including strike action – will be more important than ever before. As part of this, we will need to build towards a one-day public sector wide strike, as the launching point of a general campaign of the whole trade union movement.

This has the potential to bring this criminal Tory government to its knees. It would also raise the confidence of workers everywhere – and such a mood would spread like a wildfire.

Prepare for battle

On this basis, we can not only win our 10% pay rise and pension payback; we can show workers everywhere that they don't have to accept their lives getting worse and worse. In taking a stand, we will demonstrate to our class that there is an alternative path to cuts, privatisations, and worsening pay.



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It is becoming increasingly clear that something has to give; something has to change. More and more people can see that the capitalist class and their stooges in government – having made an absolute killing themselves – are looking to boost their profits and push the costs of the crisis onto workers once more.

Anger is building amongst our class. And it will only continue to do so as our

conditions get worse, while theirs get more opulent.

Once this energy is channelled and organised, nothing will be able to stop it. We must ensure that we are ready for this, and that we are prepared to fight until victory.

The first step towards that is to deliver a thumping Yes vote on a big turnout in this consultative ballot. ■

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A MARXIST

Marxists are class conscious fighters for socialism. As Marx explained, we should be regarded as the most resolute section of the working class.

Marxism arms us with a conscious understanding of society and the class struggle. Only by absorbing this outlook can we lay the foundation for the overthrow of capitalism.

For us, Marxism is the science of social revolution and therefore needs to be studied.

Our tendency therefore stresses the need to educate and train our members in Marxist theory and the struggles of the working class. This gives us considerable advantages. First and foremost, Marxist theory is a guide to action, a guide to the class struggle.

As isolated individuals we can do very little. However, organised together

we can achieve a considerable amount. Organisation allows us to concentrate our forces to much greater effect. Based on correct policies and perspectives, we can intervene effectively in the class struggle.

The present reformist leadership of the labour movement has led to one retreat after another. In practice they accept capitalism and its limits.

The leadership of the Labour Party is now in the grip of the right wing, who serve the interests of capitalism. This revival is due to the weakness of the left to act decisively, which in turn is a reflection of the weakness of reformism.

But the crisis of capitalism is posing massive challenges in front of the working class. We will fight shoulder to shoulder with those prepared to fight. In doing so, we will point to the future needs of the movement.

Our task is to provide the necessary clarity for the struggle. Capitalism cannot be reformed; it needs to be consciously overthrown by the working class in Britain and internationally.

That is why we are internationalists and proud to be part of the International Marxist Tendency. ■

