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STRIKE BACK AT PENSIONS ROBBERY

Date needed for joint union action

Former Labour minister Lord Hutton, on a comfortable MP's pension, has released an interim report on his investigation into public sector pensions.

To nobody's surprise, he has declared that workers should pay more and work longer to earn a lower pension.

He admits that pensions of public sector workers are far from "gold plated". The median public sector pension was £5,600 in 2009-10. NHS pensioners received on average just £4,087. Retired local government workers received only £3,048. But Hutton is still calling for major cuts.

Three public sector union leaders and activists gave their reaction, all in a personal capacity.

"These proposals are another attempt to make working people pay for the greed of the bankers and big business.

Public sector pensions, covering overwhelmingly low paid workers, are £4.5 billion per year, yet tax relief on pension contributions for the richest 1% costs us £10 billion.

The Trades Union Congress must now coordinate a united response, including coordinated industrial action, to defeat this coalition of millionaires."

*John McNally, vice president,
Public and Commercial Services union*

"The attack on public sector pensions focuses on higher contributions, increasing the retirement age and ending final salary schemes.

It was the threat of strike action, and in the case of the local government scheme actual strike action, that protected the schemes in their current forms.

Further attacks on the schemes should be met with strike action across the public sector."

Roger Bannister, Unison national executive



photo Paul Mattsson

"The government wants to say that public sector pensions need to be cut to pay for the problems of the economy.

We know that many private sector workers have had their pension schemes cut. But that is because of private sector corporations taking pension 'holidays' in order to chase profits.

We don't want public sector workers to be hit in the same way but losing our pensions is going to do nothing to help private sector pensioners.

In fact it's the opposite - fighting for our pensions is the best way to show all workers that we have to oppose the cuts that are coming.

I think the unions have to respond very quickly and show we will react very sharply. That means organising joint activities and rallies to prepare the ground for joint strike action if the government goes ahead with these proposals next year."

*Martin Powell-Davies,
National Union of Teachers national executive*

Oppose the chancellor's comprehensive spending review cuts - join the 23 October protests to protect public services, jobs and pensions.

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