

The battle is on over DWP pay

inbrief

PUBLIC AND Commercial Services union (PCS) members in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have been given management's pay offer for this year's pay increase. Against the backdrop of the Con-Dem government's public sector pay freeze this year's pay negotiations would never have resulted in anything that we could have recommended to our members.

Katrine Williams,
PCS DWP vice president,
personal capacity

43% of members are set to get nothing as they earn over the £21,000 limit for pay increases imposed by the Con-Dem government. Shockingly 57% of staff earn less than £21,000 though – some as little as 7p above the national minimum wage.

DWP management has failed to address the issues around low pay and failed to maximise the money that was available to increase members' pay.

The bonus pay pot was larger than the amount of money that was available to pay consolidated increases to those members on less than £21,000 – the majority of PCS members. And according to the government's pay freeze rules – bonuses can be paid out as normal!

Rather than management dividing



Bosses get bonuses whilst the low paid suffer.

photo The Socialist

up the performance pay pot fairly and equally to all our members, who have all worked extremely hard providing essential services to the public during a recession, management decided to pay by performance and the biggest bonuses to the highest grades. Apparently the higher paid you are – the bigger the bonus you need to keep you motivated.

This skews the money dramati-

cally in favour of the higher paid managers who, as well as receiving higher pay, were also more likely to receive the top box marking [in performance reviews] "wholly exceptional."

It was nearly 14 times more likely for a senior manager to get the top box marking than the admin assistants. So managers have awarded themselves ten times more bonus

money than the clerical grade members receiving the least amount of money – taking money away from those who are only just above minimum wage rates of pay.

Jane Aitchison, DWP group president said: "Disgracefully managers refused to put the special bonus payment pot into the general pay pot – this would have meant £65 extra for every member of staff if it was paid fairly and equally across the board.

"However local managers prefer to use the special bonus payments to reward staff as and when. Management has no data to show that these payments are made fairly or equally and certainly evidence from our members suggests the absolute opposite.

"Low paid members see nothing like £65 in bonuses a year so they can't help asking themselves 'Who is getting mine?' We will be working hard to get these bonuses paid fairly to the many who are doing all the work and who need them to improve poverty pay rates."

The Left-led PCS DWP group executive committee met and unanimously agreed to reject the government's pay freeze and this unfair offer. PCS will be holding members' meetings in every office to get members' views on the pay offer and hold an indicative ballot. We will be using the opportunity to expose the unfairness in the offer.

Unison elections



John Malcolm

Elections for seats on Unison's national executive committee close on 22 October. Socialist Party members Hugo Pierre and John Malcolm are standing for the local government male seat and the northern region male seats respectively. To help build a fighting Unison leadership up to the job of defeating the Con-Dem cuts, support these candidates.

Tube unions enter talks

Transport unions RMT and TSSA entered talks with London Underground (LU) on 12 October. Arbitration service ACAS have organised the talks, in advance of the next strike days planned for 2 and 28 November. The dispute is over plans to cut 800 ticket office and other station staff jobs. But now LU has announced further cuts. They want to get rid of 400 office and management jobs as well as leaving an equivalent number of vacancies unfilled.

Lecturers' union calls cuts conference

The University and College Union's (UCU) higher education sector, which represents academic staff in universities across the UK, will hold a special HE sector conference on 26 November to determine the course of national industrial action against job and pay cuts.

Dr Marion Hersh, speaking for the higher education committee (HEC), told UCU activists of the decision, in response to criticism from Socialist Party members and others of the HEC's decision not to call a strike ballot and its apparent disconnection from UCU rank and file.

UCU members overwhelmingly mandated the HEC to call a strike in Autumn 2010 but the HEC, lacking confidence in the success of the ballot, declined.

Over the summer, the HEC called upon UCU branches to mobilise for industrial action but took no concrete steps to build for it.

Socialists and activists in UCU had been calling for a special sector conference this month since the 3 September decision not to ballot.

Edmund Schluessel, Cardiff
University UCU
(personal capacity)

Mail centres threatened

Two London mail centres, Nine Elms and another near Canning Town, are threatened with closure by Royal Mail. This affects 1,850 workers who face redundancies and transfers involving long journeys to other workplaces. The Communication Workers Union is building a campaign to fight these closures, which not only threaten jobs but also mean a poorer service to the community.

Fight Passport Office closure

PCS MEMBERS were shocked on 8 October by the announcement that Newport Passport office would close next year. But the mood changed to determination to fight the closure as they received support from across PCS and the trade union movement. The public has been appalled at the decision which would have a detrimental impact on Newport with the loss of 300 jobs.

Katrine Williams
PCS Wales chair

A mass meeting of members was held on 11 October to start the campaign off with a bang. All the PCS members from the passport office turned up to hear speakers from their union and to get involved in the union campaign to stop the closure.

John McNally, PCS vice-president, the Identity and Passport service group president Paul McGoay and group secretary Alan Brown gave a fighting lead at the meeting. Other unions like CWU, UCU and RMT showed their solidarity.

PCS has called a demonstration against the closure for 16 October, assembling at 11am at St Woolas to march down Stow Hill, Newport.

Politicians from all four main parties in Wales have also lined up to oppose the closure. Over 2,000 peo-

ple have already signed the online petition against the closure within two days of it being set up.

Coming hot on the heels of the Ryder Cup, which we were falsely promised would bring huge benefits to Newport, the closure is a kick in the teeth to communities that have still not recovered from the closures of Llanwern steel works and other workplaces.

The anger of members was visibly demonstrated to senior managers who attempted to justify the decision but were unable to answer any of the questions that PCS members raised. They also refused to apologise to the union for saying that PCS had leaked the news of the closure, when it was clearly their own managers who had done so.

The Tory secretary of state for Wales Cheryl Gillan has attacked PCS in the media for the leak to divert attention from the actual closure announcement. But this tactic has failed miserably.

With the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on 20 October – it is vital to give a strong, industrial response to this announcement and a clear message to the Con-Dem government that we will not accept cuts.

This threatened closure clearly shows what the cuts will mean. But more importantly it shows that if the unions give a determined response



The packed mass meeting on 11 October.

photo Socialist Party Wales

to oppose the cuts it will increase workers' confidence to fight back.

The government's cuts are not inevitable nor necessary. PCS has put forward a clear alternative, including fully resourcing the HMRC to collect the unpaid and evaded tax and to close the tax loopholes which would stop tax avoidance.

A colossal £123 billion a year is wasted by not doing this – two thirds of the budget deficit. So we

are fighting for investment in jobs and services which our communities need.

We will be doing all we can to build support for the PCS members in the Identity and Passport Service and the demonstration on Saturday. This is as well as mobilising the strongest turnout of the working class for the Wales demonstration against the cuts in Cardiff on 23 October.

Greenwich council threatens mass sackings

LABOUR CONTROLLED Greenwich council in south London has sent letters to 8,000 staff threatening mass sackings unless unions agree to pay cuts. The council is threatening to freeze pay increments for four years. Employees start at the bottom of the grade and work their way up the scale over four years.

Paul Callanan

This attack on pay will hit young workers in particular. This is a pay

cut, and is an indication of the ruthless bully-boy methods the council is prepared to use to force through its £70 million cuts.

But while Rome burns, the national leadership of Unison is fiddling. Dave Prentis talks about "pacing himself" and not beginning a campaign prematurely. But in this case, the horse has not just bolted before the stable door was closed, it has run the Grand National. Cuts have already been made to car allowances. Pay for low graded administrative staff has been cut.

A unified campaign of the work-

force, linking up with service users and the community, is necessary. Unfortunately, as a result of the witch-hunt against Unison branch secretary and Socialist Party member Onay Kasab, the highly successful, combative Unison branch has been suspended.

This is precisely why Greenwich Unison members fought the witch-hunt so hard, so that they would be ready and able to defend their jobs, pay and services. But this does not mean there cannot be a fight. Unite branch 1563, which many Unison members have now joined, has

made an appeal to all council workers across the trade unions for a united campaign against the cuts.

The Socialist Party calls for a borough-wide demonstration against the ripping up of contracts, and for coordinated action by all Greenwich council unions to defend jobs, terms and conditions and services.

Greenwich Save Our Services is leading the fight against the cuts in the borough, linking together trade unionists and community campaigners.

A mass lobby of the council has been organised for 27 October.