

Unison conference NO TO PENSION ATTACKS

A Unison member

Council workers are facing unprecedented attacks – in the form of massive job cuts and a tearing up of terms and conditions in many areas.

In just two weeks time it is expected that the government will announce their intention to impose a 3% increase in public sector pension contributions. This is a pay cut in real terms and comes on top of a two-year pay freeze. Unless defeated through mass strike action, many workers will be faced with the choice of pay up or be forced out of the pension scheme.

The government is also proposing a career average instead of final salary scheme. They plan to cut the local government pension from 1/60th of our annual salary to as low as only 1/100th and they want to make us work till we are 68.

These changes, if effected, could cost some workers up to £1,000 more a year for a pension worth nearly half of what they would get now.

Even some of the employers are panicking. They are predicting that 20-40% could leave the schemes, sending the funds into downward spirals.

If the government gets away with it, this would be the biggest attack on public sector workers' pay and conditions in a generation. That is why it requires the unions to use the full strength of the five million public sector trade unionists.

Dave Prentis, general secretary

of Unison has now declared that Unison will ballot over the summer or early autumn for strike action over pension attacks if the meeting with government on 28 June does not lead to a deal. Prentis also said: "It will not be one day of action – it will be long-term industrial action throughout all our public services to prevent destruction of our pension schemes."

This is to be welcomed by Unison members and other public sector trade unionists. This shows that trade union leaders can be forced to ballot for action, when faced with an onslaught of attacks from this government and growing anger from public sector workers.

The start of the fightback will come from the three quarters of a million workers in education and the civil service who are preparing to strike on 30 June.

Unfortunately Unison will not be taking action with other unions on 30 June but the union leaders are calling on all members to support the lobbies and demonstrations and for members not to cover the work of the strikers.

Only recently Socialist Party members on the Unison national executive tried to commit the union to action on pensions no later than 31 October 2011 but this was not agreed. At a local level there are Unison branches whose members are demanding to ballot for strike action against cuts. They are being prevented from doing so by the union leadership. These bal-

lots should now immediately be sanctioned.

We must now give full backing to the 30 June strike and use it to build for an all public-sector strike that would rock this government to its foundations.

• Unison must be ready to start the pensions ballot immediately if the government refuses to back down on pension attacks

• For an all public-sector strike in defence of pensions

• Defend the final salary scheme

• No increases in contribution rates

• No to lower pension benefits



On the 26 March demo photo Paul Mattsson

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state

retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under

democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!