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what we think

Reject pensions 'deal' - fight until we win

The strike on 30 November - involving 24 trade unions and up to two million workers - was the biggest single day of strike action in many decades.

It terrified the government, with Cameron having to quickly retreat from his claim it was a "damp squib" and admit that it had been a "big strike".

It showed the power of public sector trade unions - united together - to bring the country to a halt.

Yet now Brendan Barber and the leadership of the TUC are proposing that we throw away our advantage and accept a rotten deal on pensions.

This would be a huge mistake. It would mean all public sector workers having to work longer, pay more and get less pension.

For the vast majority it would mean accepting a deal that is little or no better than what was on the table before 30 November.

Only workers aged over 50 have been excluded from the brunt of the cuts in pensions, although some aspects, such as the switch from RPI to CPI, also affect the over 50s.

In any case, this is not a new proposal and was rightly rejected by trade union leaders before, including Dave Prentis of Unison.

Accepting a rotten deal on pensions will also give the government more confidence to accelerate its massive cuts programme.

If they can get away with it the government intends to inflict a 'decade of austerity' on Britain. The cuts proposed are so brutal that even far-right Tory Norman Tebbit has said that he can't stomach them all!

Why you should reject the pensions deal - the facts for workers across the public sector

- When Lib Dem minister Danny Alexander put the government's pensions proposals to parliament on 20 December he said clearly that the government had achieved all its "savings goals" and would save tens of billions of pounds. That money is being stolen from public sector workers' pensions.
- There is no increase in the 'cost ceiling'. This means that even where there have been some small improvements for some workers' accrual rates (the rate per year at which pension benefits are built up) they are being paid for by cuts in the pensions of other workers in the same scheme.
- The amount that workers will have to pay into their pensions will still increase for all public sector pension schemes, by an average of 3.2% of salary, phased in over three years. This means that someone earning £25,000 will have to pay £800 a year more - effectively an immediate £800 a year pay cut! In health, the leadership of Unison is claiming it has won a concession because those earning less than

£26,000 will not have to pay more into their pensions for one year. However, even this puny concession is being paid for by higher paid public sector workers having to pay more.

- The 'offer' ties retirement age to state pension age. This means that anyone born on or after 6 April 1960 but before 6 April 1961 will retire at between 66 and 67 years old. People born after 6 April 1961 will not get to retire until they are 67 or older.
- Pensions will be linked to the CPI rather than the RPI inflation index. This will mean that over an average 20-year retirement, pensions will be worth up to 20% less.
- In local government the government has agreed to delay implementing these attacks by a year, until 2014, but only on the basis of the unions signing up now to misery a year down the line.
- This attack is not about the cost of the schemes, but about the government's attempts to make public sector workers pay for a crisis they didn't create!

It is essential that the trade union movement maintains a united front and steps up the struggle in defence of our pensions and against the cuts as a whole.

If we do not, then the Con-Dems will continue to drive down the living standards of the majority while bending over backwards

for the richest 1%.

Just look at how Goldman Sachs and other major corporations have been let off over £25 billion in tax over cosy dinners with the taxman, while working class, and many middle class people, are facing breathtaking cuts in living standards.

Britain's richest 10% are now an average of £100,000 a year better off than they were in 2005, while the majority have suffered an absolute fall in income.

This is set to get worse as rail fares rise by 9%, fuel prices continue to increase and wages fall.

On 12 January the executives of all the unions involved in the pensions struggle will meet to discuss whether to accept a deal. Trade unionists must inundate their leaders with emails, phone calls, petitions and lobbies demanding that they:

- Reject the Con-Dems' pensions proposals
- Set the date for the next day of coordinated strike action - in conjunction with other public sector unions - as early as possible in the New Year
- Carry out no secret deals over the heads of the membership. We demand democratic control of the negotiations.

The battle isn't over - keep the united front!

The Con-Dem government is trying to con public sector workers that the pensions struggle is over. This is a lie.

The leadership of the civil servants union, the PCS, has clearly rejected the deal. The leaders of the education unions NUT, NASUWT and UCU have not accepted it, along with the prison officers union, the POA, the civil servants unions FDA and Prospect, and NIPSA, the Northern Irish Public Sector Alliance union.

In health, Unite has not accepted the deal. In local government, Unite, Unison and GMB withdrew, following a letter by local govern-

ment minister Eric Pickles which undermined the 'deal'.

It is clear that the leadership of Unison is determined to end the pensions struggle and accept a rotten deal. However, under pressure, the general secretary Dave Prentis has had to delay a decision until it has been discussed at the Service Group Executives that are meeting on 10 January. Unison members will be lobbying the meeting.

Trade unionists across the public sector need to make sure that all the union leaders hear a deafening roar from their members - keep up the pensions fight! Set the date for the next coordinated strike!

Defend our pensions - escalate the action

(Continued from page 1)

The deal in local government was particularly lauded but in reality the only 'concessions' were more talks but without addressing the core issues, with an implementation delay until 2014 when these workers will be hit with the full force of the changes.

The TUC leaders have no confidence in trade union members or the working class generally to struggle.

They accept that the cuts are nec-

essary. Their argument that the cuts are 'too deep and too fast' reflects the view of Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, who refused to support the strike.

PCS has been at the forefront of the battle to defend pensions and it is clear the government is targeting our union as the 'problem'.

Press attacks on general secretary Mark Serwotka and the union are reaching fever pitch.

The accusation that Mark did not attend any negotiations, for example, is a plain lie. PCS has not walked away from talks, it has been excluded.

Liverpool's managed decline: Tarzan to the rescue?

Tony Mulhearn
Former Liverpool councillor

In a breathtaking example of Tory mendacity former 'Minister for Merseyside' Michael Heseltine claims he rescued Liverpool from 'managed decline'.

This fate was proposed by chancellor Geoffrey Howe following the 1981 Toxteth riots, as shown by recently released government archives. But the blunt fact is that the decline continued.

In the two years after the riots not a single house for rent had been built by the Liberal/Tory alliance which controlled the council; council rents were the highest in the UK outside London; 5,000 council jobs had vanished, and some £30 million had been slashed from Liverpool's rate support grant by Heseltine's Thatcher government.

Youth unemployment in some areas of the city was in excess of 50%, and the defeated Liberal/Tory alliance had left behind a financial gap of £10 million pounds of unallocated cuts.

This was the dark scenario inherited by the newly elected socialist Labour council in May 1983.

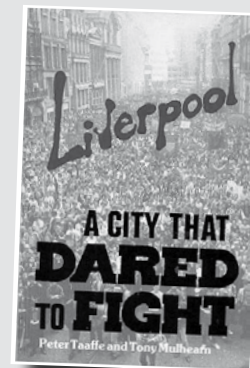
In the two years after the riots not a single house for rent had been built by the Liberal/Tory council

Unlike the capitulation of today's 'Labour' councillors, that scenario was not used as an excuse for doing nothing, but as a reason for carrying out their election promises by launching a programme of action which included: building houses, freezing rents, creating jobs, expanding services, and opening six new sports centres.

By contrast Heseltine planted hundreds of trees.

If Liverpool's dogs could vote no doubt his Lordship would top the poll.

socialist books



Liverpool

A City that Dared to Fight

By Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn

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Socialist Women

Sunday 8 January, 10am - 3.30pm

National meeting for women in the Socialist Party
Morning: Women and the Cuts - how the crisis is affecting women

Afternoon: The Socialist Party and the Women's Movement

An evening social will be held on Saturday 7 January
For more info and to book your place email janejames@socialistparty.org.uk, phone 020 8988 8777 or phone/text 07956 132 470