

Bulletin of Socialist Party members in *Usdaw*

Tesco pittance wage increase for it's low paid workers!

Many workers in Tesco will be disappointed with the announcement of only a 1.4% pay increase. For all the talk of a crisis in the retail industry, including for Tesco, it is still an expanding business and made around £3bn in profit over the last year. In reality 1.4% means only an 11p increase, less than the 19p increase that the minimum wage will see in October.

What perhaps will be even more agonising for union members is that this came after the national forum had rejected the initial offer. When Tesco came back again with the same offer, it appears our leadership blinked first, and although not recommending the offer, have concluded that nothing can be done about it and will let Tesco impose it.

This is the reality of partnership – a dictatorship where Tesco says jump and Usdaw's leaders end up asking how high. The only way to have shifted Tesco would have been to have organised a campaign to force them to come back with a better offer.

And there was a golden opportunity to do just that. During these negotiations a campaign was being waged separate from the union to force the



The London rate of the living wage is £8.80 per hour, but even that is a living wage only in conjunction with receiving in-work benefits

Tesco AGM to support paying staff a living wage. Why couldn't Usdaw have linked up with this in public stunts, publicity events and protests?

Indeed at Usdaw's ADM in 2013 a proposition that says we should be doing just that was passed. It called for "An immediate campaign including public rallies and lobbies of MPs" and "instructs all negotiators to press all employers for the living wage to be the minimum pay rate for all adults in 2013 and succeeding years."

Apparently the committee did also discuss the possibility of industrial action, even for just an hour on a bank holiday or other key trading time. With low paid council workers set to strike for a better pay deal, it's no wonder this is being discussed. Yet Usdaw's leadership

believes that retail workers, unlike other low paid workers, will not strike. Cynically, this is justified on the basis that times are hard and workers can't afford to lose pay for striking. Well, we can't afford to live on low pay either!

Moreover, it defies the very history of our union. Our predecessor union, AUCE, was somewhat late in adopting the strike weapon – but did so precisely because negotiation alone couldn't shift management in the Co-op to pay a decent wage in the early 20th century. The travesty is that we are having to fight that battle again over 100 years later!

To build up confidence to take such action, members must be engaged fully in the campaign for a living wage. It is laughable that the same people who

say workers won't fight, don't let them have a voice in the process by reinstating the pay ballot in Tesco. A campaign will now have to be waged within the union along those lines, with the restoration of the ballot as a key demand.

But as weakness invites aggression, reps will have to prepare for Tesco to attempt to push through all the other proposed attacks in attempt to boost its

profits to compensate for its declining market share. A key step in such a fightback will be the upcoming union elections where Tesco rep and Activist supporter Amy Murphy will be standing for President and for re-election to the EC alongside other candidates prepared to fight Tesco, including Activist supporter Scott Jones who moved the living wage proposition in 2013.

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www.youthfightforjobs.com

A cartoon from Youth Fight for Jobs campaign against Tesco's use of the workfare schemes in 2012

Your Comments

Not even the same percentage as minimum payrise!!! 2 members in my shop use food banks and was hoping for a decent rise to show how much Tesco value how hard we have worked for them through these hard time But instead we have been insulted

J, Tesco rep

1.42% less than most other supermarkets and on the same

day Nestle have announced they are going to pay a living wage to all its workers. And in the face of a 32,000 strong petition at Tesco's AGM calling for the same AND 21 times less than the 30% pay rise Philip Clarke has got.

There was massive anger from the reps at my briefing, got a good response when I mentioned about strike action, Clarke's pay, Tesco's profit etc. The national forum rejected the offer initially by the way, also went down well when I

suggested bringing back the ballot so members could have had a say too.

There was some Tesco apolo-gism from some reps (we're lucky to get anything and Tesco are struggling) but that didn't wash with the majority and the AO's and Tesco managers present got short shrift when they tried this tack too. One rep said we're lucky because nurses and government workers haven't had a pay rise at all and one rep pointed out that they are going on strike so why can't we. Sums it up really

S, Tesco rep

New pamphlet

We Need...

A Socialist, Fighting Usdaw

Includes articles on zero-hour contracts, partnership, union democracy, young workers, Labour Party as well as an obituary for the late Robbie Segal, former EC member

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