

# Propaganda attacks on public sector workers Countering the Con-Dem government's offensive

**T**HE DAILY Mail reports with glee that Tory prime minister David Cameron wants to get rid of public sector workers' 'gold plated pensions'. I think he will have a job on his hands to find workers with such a pension given that the average local government pension for men will be just £4,000 a year and as low as £2,800 for women!

By a Leicestershire  
local government worker

Maybe Cameron's talking about the final salary pensions based on salaries of some of the highest paid staff who work at Leicestershire county council? Eight officers earned more than £100,000 in 2008/2009, with chief executive John Sinnott earning £191,105 in the same year.

But Sinnott's salary isn't the highest paid by a local authority. According to a recent Panorama TV programme, the Tory flagship borough of Wandsworth, south London, pays its chief executive Gerald Jones a staggering £299,925 a year.

The right wing media and coalition government also seem to want to divide workers by claiming that public sector workers earn far more than those in the private sector. Yet two-thirds of local government workers earn less than £21,000 a year and face a three-year pay freeze, ie a pay cut after taking into account price inflation.

In the three months to May 2010, private sector pay freezes accounted for 10% of pay settlements and 40% in the public sector. This meant that public sector pay freezes were already happening when the govern-



The vast majority of workers in the public and the private sector earn very low wages. photo Paul Mattsson

ment announced a two year pay freeze in the June budget.

I know a fellow Unison union member who has four part time jobs and also a home care worker in the private sector who works over 50 hours a week. These women, who provide a vital service, work these long hours to try to make ends meet. What an insult to them that the chief executive earns nearly £200,000 providing nothing but a threat to cut jobs and services.

What is clear is that the vast majority of workers in the public and the private sector earn very low wages. Where public sector workers have been able to defend some of their rights and conditions it is not down to generous employers. Instead this is in part due to a higher number of public sector workers being in trade unions, who can use their collective strength to fight for better conditions at work.

The trade unions should organise the unorganised and counter the black propaganda of the right wing media and government ministers who continually paint a false picture of a feather-bedded public sector workforce. Clearly the aim of this propaganda is to soften up public opinion in relation to carrying out massive public sector cuts in jobs, which will hit vital public services.

As trade unionists we must not allow the government or media to divide workers and will unite in action to save jobs and services and fight for decent pay.

- 869,000 council workers earn less than £18,000 a year.
- Public sector workers, including teachers and nurses, had their take home pay cut in real terms after a further two-year salary freeze was imposed in the June budget.
- Just under 50% of local government workers work part time and are mainly low paid women in caring roles, earning just 49p above the minimum wage.
- Average earnings are around 8% higher in workplaces where the bulk of the workforce is covered by trade union collective bargaining.

## Bosses want workers' pensions axed

**T**HE BOSSES' organisation – the CBI – has demanded that chancellor George Osborne ends public sector workers' final salary pension schemes and scraps universal welfare entitlements such as child benefit and winter fuel allowance. The CBI wants these cuts to be made in order for the government to maintain spending on (highly profitable) big infrastructure projects.

While private sector bosses continue to enjoy 'gold plated' pensions, 75,000 workers in the private sector were robbed of their final salary pensions last year.

87% of private employers refuse to let new workers join their final salary schemes and increasingly are closing their doors to existing workers too. Corporate giants such as Vodafone, Dairycrest and IBM, have closed, or are threatening to close their schemes to existing workers.

## Stroud says no to BNP media centre

**P**EOPLE IN the Gloucestershire town of Stroud, were shocked and outraged to find out that the far right, racist British National Party (BNP) plans to spread its lies from a national 'propaganda' centre (media centre) here. A building has been bought by a lorry company owned by BNP organiser Jim Dowson, a rabid racist and anti-abortionist.

Chris Moore

Gloucestershire Socialist Party

Stroud is not a sleepy backwater. We have a proud history of struggle, playing a prominent role in the anti-poll tax campaign under Thatcher, successfully campaigning to save a local hospital and a post office and

sending a double-decker bus to the demo that helped close the BNP HQ in Welling, south east London in the early 1990s.

Inspired by the recent successful campaign to close the BNP 'festival of hate' in Derbyshire, we are now mobilising trade unionists, community activists and others to campaign against the BNP. It will be important to link this campaign to the fight against the Con-Dem government's cuts, with Labour also supporting a vicious cuts package. Working class people need their own political voice and party to undercut the divisive racist lies of the BNP.

**Public Meeting: 'Say No To The BNP', Wednesday 29 September, 7.30pm at The Space, Lansdown, Stroud.**

## Trade unionists challenge Lib-Dems

**O**N SUNDAY 19 September, despite pouring rain, 4,000 trade unionists rallied in Liverpool to lobby the Liberal Democrat party conference.

Paul Gerrard

Salford Socialist Party

The Tories and their Lib-Dem coalition government partners are axing thousands of public sector workers' jobs and pushing through billions of pounds of cuts in essential public services in an attempt to make working people pay for the economic crisis caused by capitalism.

From the assembly point at Salt-house Dock, I watched as a feeder march joined the static rally to terrific applause, doubling the size of the rally.

Led by the banners of the teaching unions, there were significant contingents from PCS, the civil servants' union, and Unison, the public sector workers' union, plus several local groups, including the Liverpool Joint Trade Union Committee.

For 'security reasons' the rally was

not allowed in the immediate vicinity of the conference but there was no shortage of Lib-Dem delegates to discuss with. One young delegate I gave a leaflet to said he had been a Labour supporter but was repelled by the Labour government's approach to civil liberties issues and joined the Lib-Dems after the general election.

He totally agreed that there was now no difference between the Lib-Dems and the Tories and that big business 'ruled the roost', quoting the deal revenue and customs (HMRC) have done to write off £6 billion of tax which Vodafone should have paid.

This was ironic given that Lib-Dem Treasury chief secretary Danny Alexander, that same afternoon, was promising Lib-Dem delegates that the government was going to get tough with tax evaders.

This was a good start for the labour and trade union movement in the north west, and drew a good response from the activist layer. Now we need a national demo and one-day general strike in the public sector!

## fastnews

### Big oil failure

**NOTWITHSTANDING** THE oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, which followed a fatal explosion on the BP-leased Deepwater Horizon rig in April, the UK government has refused to impose a moratorium on deepwater oil drilling in the North Sea.

This refusal is despite offshore inspection records showing that five out of six BP North Sea installations failed to comply with emergency regulations on oil spills. Shell was also cited for breaking rules regarding oil spill training preparedness in five out of 27 inspections in the last five years. In fact the North Sea safety record of 'big oil' has deteriorated with the number of accidental oil and gas leaks increasing by 40% in 2009-10 compared to the previous year. Serious injuries to oil workers also shot up by 70% in the same period.

### Sack the boss

**MICHAEL O'LEARY**, the £700,000 a year chief executive of Ryanair, is no stranger to spouting reactionary tosh. When he's not dismissing the idea that climate change is caused by capitalist industrial activity as "horseshit", his latest missive is to stop using co-pilots on Ryanair flights to save money.

O'Leary dismissed the crucial safety role of co-pilots saying: "They just sit back, press a button and put it on autopilot. They then read newspapers or just do nothing."

But the potty-mouth multimillionaire received a witty riposte from one of his most senior pilots, captain Morgan Fischer: "I would propose that Ryanair replace the chief executive with a probationary cabin crew member currently earning €13,200 (£11,000) net per annum.

"Ryanair would benefit by saving millions of euros in salary, benefits and stock options."

Captain Fischer delivered the coup de grace by suggesting O'Leary's dismissal could even generate cash for the airline by charging the new chief executive just over £2,000 to retrain - the figure he said new cabin crew recruits have to pay for their own training.

### Tax avoidance

**WHILE SCREWING** low income benefit claimants in order to cut the UK's budget deficit, the Con-Dem government is choosing to ignore the £42 billion in uncollected taxes – including nearly £7 billion in corporation tax.

The total tax gap grew to £42 billion from £38 billion last year and represents 39% of this year's estimated £155 billion budget deficit. The burgeoning tax gap doesn't include the legal tax avoidance schemes of big corporations and 'non-dom' tax dodgers.

### Support Tommy and Gail

**FORMER SCOTTISH** socialist MSP Tommy Sheridan and his partner Gail begin their trial on charges of perjury on Monday 4 October at the High Court in Glasgow.

This case, brought by the Scottish Crown Office, follows Tommy Sheridan's famous defamation victory over the Rupert Murdoch owned News of the World in 2006 (see www.socialistworld.net). Please send messages of support to Tommy and Gail at info@socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

### Campaign for a New Workers' Party (CNWP)

CNWP extended steering committee meeting

Sunday 26 September, 12noon-4pm

Room 3B, University of London Union building, Malet Street, London WC1. (nearest Tube stations: Euston, Euston Square and Goodge Street)

Main business: CNWP's response to public spending cuts + promoting alternative anti-cuts candidates.

Also: Widening steering committee membership, 2011 conference, relaunching the CNWP declaration, and process by which the prototype of a new left party could be established.

Open to all members of the CNWP and supporters.

Further info: Dave Nellist, CNWP Chair - dave@nellist.net 024 7622 9311.  
www.cnwp.org.uk