

## Democracy – The Choice before Conference

Conference delegates are being asked to either endorse or condemn the NEC's outrageous decision to re-elect itself for another year but in truth the issue is a simple one: either elections are a vital part of the life of this union or they are not. The leadership speciously speaks of branches having the opportunity to hold the NEC to account (at conference six months after the decision) but the ultimate accountability must always be to members in the union's one member/one vote democracy.

### **The NEC claim that democracy was too expensive**

The Union leadership claimed that democracy in 2015 would be too expensive and that all other areas were being "cut by the maximum amount." Yet the hard copy production of the union magazine costs £700,000 a year when it could have been put on line. We spend many very large sums on affiliation to the various TUCs when a reduction could have been sought or imposed. The NEC was still recruiting new staff whilst it was re-electing itself on cost grounds at an "emergency", i.e. unscheduled and costly, meeting convened just days after the previous and scheduled NEC.

The leadership has spent a small fortune during its years of union control by paying off full time officers whilst recruiting new officers - paying out pensions to those it has early retired and large lump sums to others whilst adding to the pay bill and pension liability.

Between them, the General and Assistant Secretary cost over £200,000 a year (when pension and other related costs are added in), with salaries massively in excess of the average PCS member and significantly in excess of the best paid PCS members: in a union led by would be Marxists who are supposedly committed to workers' representatives on a workers' wage! If the Union had the rational pay structure long advocated by PCS IL we would be saving approximately £100K pa.

### **Check-off**

The leadership claimed that democracy would distract us all from the DD sign-up campaign but never explained why this would be any more the case than with the other many union activities we all still carry out. We appreciate that the attention span of the leadership is not great (look how easily it forgets to carry out conference instructions), but the rest of us long ago learned to focus on key activities whilst still meeting other duties.

### **Tory anti-unionism**

Clear indications of a Tory attack on check off began emerging in December 2012 and continued to build but the leadership proved too inert for far too long in the face of the coming attack. And a leadership unable to predict and prepare for an attack despite all the anti-union bellicosity from the Tories is in reality a weather vane that moves only when it is blown.

We should never forget or forgive what the Tories have done to working class people and the Unions but that cannot be an excuse for not holding to account trade union leaders of all stripes. Whilst the crisis has been caused by the Tories, how well the union prepares and responds is down to our leaders...and their track record is dire.

# UNITE and the Transfer of Undertakings

Last year Conference carried Motion A463 instructing the NEC to urgently circulate to members a full report on the talks that ***had already taken place*** to transfer PCS to Unite, including the steps taken by PCS negotiators to ensure the minimum conditions laid down for talks by ADC 2013. Members and Conference are still awaiting that urgent report.

Motion A463 also directed that written reports of all future talks should be given to the NEC and circulated to branches. Branches are still awaiting any report. Of course the PCS leadership might claim that there have not been any talks (although that is not the impression given by the UNITE leadership) but then the NEC could have simply added a sentence to the report ***on the past talks*** to say that there had not been any more talks post 2014 Conference but it would update branches if the talks resumed. But absolutely nothing has been said to the lay membership.

Whatever delegates' views on the merit of PCS transfer to UNITE the lack of information since ADC 2014 reveals an appalling lack of transparency, especially given the importance of the issue and the strong feelings expressed on all sides of the debate last year. ***Conference should therefore vote for A36.***

Perhaps we will be confronted with an emergency NEC motion, although it is difficult to see on what basis any motion about merger with UNITE could properly be called an emergency in the constitutional sense i.e. that the essential fact of the issue was unknown before the constitutional deadline.

What we can say is that in purely industrial terms there is no industrial logic in PCS joining UNITE. Unite has members in the Civil Service and the Metropolitan Police but not in so great a number that it would make sense joining the two organisations together; we don't compete for members in the private sector in which UNITE predominantly recruits; and PCS is essentially a "single industry" union with a widespread membership understanding of the key industrial issues and enjoys directly elected committees, annual elections and annual conferences. Unite's national conferences are indirectly elected by regional committees and regional industrial sector committees; national policy conference takes place every two years; national rules conference every four years; industrial sector conferences every two years. Elections for the Unite Executive Council, Regional and Branch Committees are held every three years.

**PCS IL Fringe meeting - All welcome**

***Following the general election...DON'T MOURN, ORGANISE!***

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May**

**Speakers: Chris Marks, DWP GEC  
Ian Hough, R&C Your Voice**

**Venue: The Regency Suite, The Old Ship Hotel, Kings Rd  
(turn left out of the front of the Conference centre, 5 minutes along the sea front)**