

The type of Union we need

Today we will debate, amongst other things, the thorny issue of Full Time Officer pay. The starting pay for Full Time Officials according to the 2015 financial report is £40,539. We have two officials, the General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary in a payband where the max is £92,500. Given the length of time both incumbents have served it is more than likely that they are both receiving this.

We must ask ourselves the question – what sort of union do we want? The answer for us is clear; a trade union championing membership interests, run by members, and employing elected officials who are in touch with members and who are not lifted to a lifestyle out of kilter with a large part of the membership by the fact of trade union employment. It cannot be right that the General Secretary earns four times that of the average member in a union that professes to be the most left wing in the British labour movement.

This policy is not an optional extra for us and “voluntary donations” are not a substitute – the union needs a wage policy reflecting its philosophy, not a guilt trip on individuals’ sense of conscience (and if you look at the annual accounts you will see that virtually nothing is donated back by the most senior officials). Besides, asking individuals to donate back part of their wages to PCS is hardly tax efficient.

PCS Independent Left believes that every step that increases membership control over the union must be fought for. So we must continue to insist that full time officers should be elected by the members and paid a wage that is no more than the average skilled worker’s wage and certainly more in line with that received by members if we wish to increase rank and file control of our union.

The NEC opposed the last attempt at conference by IL supporters to push the union into adopting a policy long held by our 'left' leadership. Anyone who saw the national election broadcast for the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition would have seen Dave Nellist proudly proclaim that their candidates would, if elected, only take a workers wage. It will be very interesting to see what the response will be from them this year, given the financial crisis we find ourselves in. Of course there is always the alliance with the PCS Democrats as a useful fig leaf if it’s needed! However, much is made of the fact that the 'left' lead the union and they have done so now for over 12 years. It is time that words are turned into deeds. Support motion **A39!**

Further Assaults on Trade Union Democracy

The Tories have wasted no time in ramping up their attacks on workers and their organisations. As promised in their manifesto, they plan to introduce in the Queens speech legislation that will require Unions to achieve a 50% + 1 threshold in strike ballots before they can take action. In what they describe as key sectors: Transport, Education, Health and the Fire Service 40% of eligible members must vote yes, and there must be a majority for action, before strikes can take place. They also plan to allow agencies to recruit scabs to replace strikers.

It is also likely that the period of notice a union is required to give an employer of action (currently 7 days) will be extended and there will be a shelf life on strike mandates for discontinuous strike action. These changes will make a vote for national strike action extremely difficult to achieve. We may be wrong, but we can't think of a single national strike ballot in PCS' history where turn out has been greater than 50%.

The hypocrisy of all this is obvious. The Tories formed a majority government with the support of 24.4% of the electorate. That doesn't even take into account voting methods. Most voters in a general or local authority election cast their vote at a polling station. In strike ballots the method is postal voting. Much of the anti union legislation was passed in the early nineties. These days most people have access to the internet or smart phones or tablets. Why can't Union members vote using these devices.

Of course the legislation is deliberately designed to inhibit worker participation. Union members end up atomised, voting on their own and not in a collective way.

We believe that rank and file members should determine their own Union rule books free from state intervention. If Union members wish to vote for strikes in mass membership meetings then they should have that right.

PCS IL Fringe meeting - All welcome

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

**Speakers: Chris Marks, DWP GEC
Ian Hough, HMRC 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)