

PENSIONS :

Stay united and fight on !

TELL THE COALITION 'NO DEAL'

'AGREEMENT' WOULD STILL MEAN WE PAY MORE, GET LESS & RETIRE OLDER

TELL YOUR UNION: REJECT THE OFFER

THE OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE over pensions is hanging in the balance.

On November 30, two million trade unionists took part in one of the biggest united actions seen for generations. Yet, two weeks later, the Government hoped it could bully trade unions into accepting little more than the inadequate 'offer' that we had already rejected.

Unfortunately, some unions did cave-in to the pressure to sign-up by Christmas to the proposed 'Heads of Agreement' deal - but others correctly stood firm.

The main education unions, NUT, NASUWT, UCU - along with UCAC in Wales and EIS in Scotland - refused to sign-up by the imposed deadline. The PCS rejected the civil service 'deal' outright - and have the support of others like NIPSA. The Health 'deal' was also rejected by the UNITE union.

Now we have to call on EVERY union to reject the deal. We were right to strike together against these plans in November. Now we need to do so again in January.

As the summary of the 'Agreement' on the back of this 'Classroom Teacher' shows, no significant concessions were given by the Coalition to union negotiators. The underlying principles are brutally clear - public sector workers must pay more, to get less pension and to retire older. If this deal goes through, it also risks encouraging the Government to accelerate all its other attacks on our conditions, jobs, pay and public services.

Danny Alexander couldn't hide his glee when he told Parliament that "These agreements deliver the government's key objectives in full, and do so with no new money since our November offer". Once the truth is revealed, there will be real anger against those who have caved-in so easily. But Ministers hope that a deal can be rushed through before opposition from below can put a stop to it.

When the NASUWT and NUT Union Executives meet in early January to discuss the proposals, they must be rejected. In doing so, they must also confirm plans for further action alongside other unions in the New Year. At least now the stark reality will be clear to all - we fight on or we allow the Con-Dems to get away with their robbery of our hard-earned pensions.

EMERGENCY CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY 7 JANUARY

NAME DAY FOR NATIONAL STRIKE

The PCS Left Unity National Committee invites all activists from all unions to an organising conference on the 7th of January to debate how we can build the campaign to defend our pensions and fight the cuts and prevent any unacceptable "deal" that makes us work longer, pay more and get less.

This will be an organising conference, not just a debating forum. It is intended to arm activists with the issues so they can go back to their workplaces and into their unions in order to build a campaign that will secure justice on pensions.

ORGANISING CONFERENCE
Saturday 7th January
Friends Meeting House
(opp. Euston Station, London)
11am - 4pm
 Chair: Janice Godrich
 PCS President
 Speaker: Mark Serwotka
 PCS General Secretary

Left Unity in PCS is hosting an emergency joint-union conference in London on Saturday January 7th in Friends Meeting House, Euston. Speakers include Mark Serwotka and Kevin Courtney. Everyone who wants to organise a serious defence of our pensions against the Government's attacks should try and be there.



WHY WE MUST REJECT THE PENSIONS 'AGREEMENT'

NO MORE MONEY

In negotiations, Ministers refused to increase the overall 'cost-ceiling' budget for the pension schemes. That's why Danny Alexander was able to announce that the proposed 'deal' would still mean that the Government would save "tens of billions of pounds".

With these cuts in place, there is no prospect of meaningful negotiations. Any 'concessions' granted would have to be paid for by worsening some other aspect of our pensions scheme.

WE STILL PAY MORE ...

The Government did not budge on the plans to increase the amount we pay for our pensions. Instead they passed the legislation needed to bring in the first phase of the increases in April!

For a UPS3 teacher in Inner London, that's still a £48 monthly pay cut in 2012 (£30 in England/Wales), and a £123 monthly cut by 2014 (£74 in E/W). All this while they continue to hold down our pay as inflation rises.

... BUT THEY PAY LESS !

The proposed 'agreement' says that "The gross cost ceiling has been fixed at 21.7%". We're paying in 50% more - with average contributions going up to 9.6% of salary from the existing 6.4%. But, to total 21.7%, that must mean employers' contributions will be going down from 14.1% to 12.1% !

No wonder Danny Alexander bragged in Parliament that his proposals will make pensions "substantially more affordable to alternative providers". Yes, the Government is robbing us to make it easier for big business to make profits out of privatisation.

WE STILL GET LESS PENSION

The publicity about the improved 1/57 'accrual rate' (compared to the 1/60 rate that applies in the existing final-salary scheme for new entrants)

neglects to mention that this will apply to a Career-Average pension rather than the existing Final-Salary pension. Career-average schemes generate a smaller pension unless the 'accrual rate' is considerably improved. For example, the career-average scheme negotiated in 2006 for the civil service has the much better rate of 1/43. A rate of 1/57 would still mean pensions robbery.

The Government is also insisting on linking pensions to the Consumer Prices Index instead of the higher RPI. This means at least a further 15% cut in pensions paid out over retirement.

MOST OF US STILL RETIRE OLDER

Teacher union negotiators had hoped the Government might agree a compromise where our Pension Age would be set lower than the State Pension Age. Ministers refused. In fact they have made things worse - Osborne announced in his Autumn Statement that the increase in State Pension Age will now hit more workers. Now anyone born after 6 April 1961 will not get to retire on their full pension until they are 67 or older. For younger teachers, it will be 68 - although this age is likely to rise even further.

The 'agreement' did contain the small concession that had already been offered in November - that teachers set to retire between 2012 and 2022 would still be able to claim their pension in full at their existing retirement ages. But even these teachers would still have to pay in more from 2012 and get less in retirement due to the change to CPI. This 'offer' was rejected as inadequate then - it remains as inadequate today.

MORE DETAILS ON OUR BLOG

<http://classroomteachers.blogspot.com/>

LANGDON SCHOOL: Action brings results

After ten days of strike action, NUT members at Langdon School in Newham voted overwhelmingly to suspend their strikes after growing pressure on the Local Authority helped to achieve some significant movement in negotiations to resolve the original grievances around workload and oppressive management.

The dispute is still far from resolved and members may need to return to strike action if the negotiated outcomes do not produce acceptable changes at the school.

However, as the Langdon NUT reps have said in their latest statement:

"We feel that we have shown that collective action works and that we have made considerable gains. We have won those victories because our group was willing to stand firm in the face of massive bullying and strike breaking attempts and maintain a solid and united strike ...

We think we have shown that the NUT is a union which fights for its members and stands up to bullies at work ... The enormous solidarity we received from all of you kept us firm ... Our group is transformed. We have new members, new strikers, new pickets, new speakers and new organisers ... Our morale is high and we have learned many lessons which we will put to good use."

Hopefully, the school management, the Labour Local Authority and the Tory Ministers who issued the advice to recruit strike-breakers will have realised that running a school with supply staff is not easy to sustain - and that unions will be prepared to respond with the action necessary to confront such a threat. But the dispute has been a warning about the methods that will be used to try and stop unions defending teachers and education against cuts.

Classroom Teacher

... is an initiative ...
by, and for, classroom teachers
... voicing the concerns and
experiences of classroom teachers
... so we can build action to win
change for classroom teachers

If you want :

... help organising a strong Union group in your school
... to share your views about the pressures teachers face
... to take action to defend teachers and education ...

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