

Scottish Socialist

Party

COUNCIL WORKERS VOICE

unity is strength

join the national

DEMO

called by Falkirk UNISON
Sat 16 Dec

11am, Estate Ave, Callendar
Park, Falkirk

*stop the SNP council
imposing pay cuts through
mass dismissal of staff*

STRIKE FORCES HUGE CLIMBDOWN BY LABOUR WAGE-SNATCHERS

UNITED STRIKE ACTION WORKS!

now use union strength to finish the fight!

The prospects of a united 3-day strike by all UNISON members has forced the Labour city council into a massive **climbdown**. Existing staff will now be guaranteed protection of their current salaries indefinitely - instead of nearly 5,000 facing cliff-edge pay drops of up to £10,000 in March 2009. Some workers may feel frustrated at the strike cancellation after gearing up for a mighty showdown with the employers who have treated them like dirt. **But make no mistake, this is a substantial victory for militant trade union strike action.**

The council caved in on the very eve of the biggest conflict they faced from workers in several years - and 5 months before they have to explain themselves to the public in the May elections. Their fear of electoral oblivion - like hanging - concentrates the minds of Labour councillors wonderfully!

It is not, however, a 100%, clean-cut victory for the union.

Unless unions mount an irresistible campaign against the hiving off of Culture and Leisure Services to a Trust Quango, then lifetime protection of wages will not apply to the 600-plus CLS staff who faced vicious pay cuts in the Review. But the power of a united, mobilised union membership is what has won hundreds - sometimes thousands - of pounds a year in wages that another 4,000 workers would otherwise have lost in March 2009.

Any union official who imagines it was their 'negotiating skills' or their good relations with Labour that won this substantial retreat from the council is deluding themselves. It was fear, sheer panic, at the prospect of a shutdown of services, including emergency services, that forced Steven Purcell and his Labour wage-snatchers to open up talks with UNISON on Saturday with the immortal words "What do you need to avoid this strike?"

For 35 years they had failed to implement Equal Pay legislation - exploiting women for their cheap labour.

For 7 years they have failed to fund or implement the equal pay promised under the Single Status Agreement.

Last year Labour conceded paltry, inadequate compensation packages - but paid for it with cuts to jobs and services.

Up until the literal eve of the strike they wanted to cut up to



£10,000 off nearly 5,000 workers' wages - with the bogus promise that re-training and job re-design would avert that prospect before the original March 2009 deadline.

Unity, solidarity, militancy, readiness to strike all together and NOT concede to the council's vicious moral blackmail about 'life and limb' cover is what forced the council to extend that deadline indefinitely - in effect conceding lifetime protection of current salaries.

As well as stopping wage cuts to most staff, the willingness of members to strike has forced the council to the negotiating table on a whole raft of outstanding issues.

UNISON and other unions now must drive home the advantage handed to them by the membership, in the aftermath of the council's climbdown, and take up issues such as:

- outright opposition to removal of Culture and Leisure Services from council ownership - no quango - fight to include CLS staff in lifetime protection of salaries
- fight against the Review's flawed job evaluation scheme - regrade upwards - equalise pay upwards, not downwards
- fight for no detriment to new staff's pay and conditions
- oppose council attempts to dodge overtime payment rates through re-definition of the 'normal' working day to 6am-8pm.

The battle for equal pay, and protection of pay, benefits and services is by no means over. Although not a total, unqualified victory, this is a substantial victory for trade union solidarity which makes us ten times stronger in completing the task.

Strikes work! The council are running in panic - keep chasing them!

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“This is a very positive outcome, winning pay protection that was not on offer before members prepared strike action.

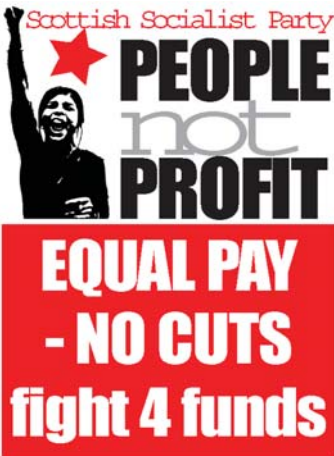
As an example, the ‘graffiti team’ workers will no longer lose £8,000 out of their £20,000 wage.

A very important lesson for the union is that industrial action works - and refusal to provide ‘life and limb’ cover is what broke the council. The council couldn’t get people cleared by Disclosure Scotland quickly enough from neighbouring councils to cover children’s homes.

And hospital wards they toyed with using were unfit for humans. All else is back on the table for negotiation.

This settlement does nothing to address the low pay of women workers, where even the ‘gainers’ often got derisory rises of £200. There will still be a struggle. The pay protection has no meaning to Culture & Leisure Service staff unless we turn our attention now to the council offloading of CLS.”

Alex Gordon, UNISON convener, EPS



“29% of Culture & Leisure face pay cuts - and if we are externalised into a Trust, the pay protection deal will not cover us. All we would get is the feeble protection under TUPE, which is only ever temporary.

The council target is to offload CLS by next July to some undefined type of Trust, a Quango. Their aim is to save £10m. The Trust Board would make the decisions on our terms and conditions, with all bets off. Democratic accountability would not exist. The Trust Chair would have the power to over-rule Board decisions, even though the council would still ostensibly be funding it.

We need to mount a campaign to retain council services inside the council, with democratic accountability.

The council has just announced externalising the jobs of 492 people in ICT.

Last week they told the *Evening Times* that the St Mungo Museum is to be hived off to a Trust in January. They had no consultation whatsoever with the union. The council head of Museums went to St Mungo staff at 5pm on the Friday to tell them what was happening! Meantime they got the *Evening Times* article pulled. We’ve still not heard from them as a union!

John Devine, UNISON convener, CLS

Labour is snatching wages, issuing vicious accusations about strikers threatening lives. Falkirk SNP council are dismissing all staff to impose pay cuts. What did the ALLEGEDLY ever-so-radical Greens have to say as we were forced to strike?

“People relying on Glasgow council services will be left in the lurch, while most UNISON members didn’t even feel strongly enough to vote in the ballot.”

Green MSP Patrick Harvie, Sunday Herald, 3 December 2006

“This is a victory for us, a substantial but not total victory. Senior management were running round like headless chickens on Monday. NHS management were seeking volunteers to cover Children’s Homes as late as 11 o’clock Monday morning. It belatedly dawned on management and the council that they couldn’t cover emergency services. They were shitting themselves at the implications of ‘life and limb’ cover being withdrawn. That’s what tipped the balance and caused the council to climb down. But it’s not all done and dusted. The council were complacent, we shocked them, we now need to use our strength. It was the willingness of members to strike that gained a result.”

Willie Campbell, Social Work UNISON steward

SSP MSP Rosie Kane has put this motion to the parliament:

Title: Victory for militant trade union action at Glasgow City Council

“That the Parliament congratulates UNISON members in Glasgow City Council for the substantial victory they have achieved after the council caved in on the eve of a planned three-day strike which would have been the biggest conflict they faced from trade unionists in several years; notes the negotiated agreement means the union has won a settlement that amounts to indefinite or lifetime protection of current salaries, i.e. either people will be re-trained or their jobs re-designed to guarantee them their current pay by March 2009, or that deadline will be extended indefinitely until such time as these devices kick in; recognises that the Culture & Leisure Services Department are still threatened by a proposal to hive them off to a charitable trust which would mean only one year's protection under TUPE; further notes that women underpaid for decades have still not achieved full compensation to the value of potential equal pay claims but in so doing, recognises that this victory strengthens the trade union and its members and will enable them to organise and achieve fair and equal terms and conditions in the future.”

The SSP is the party of the millions, not the millionaires. JOIN US!

We campaign for:

- **£8 minimum wage for all over 16, no exemptions. Equal pay for women.**
- **shorter working week without loss of pay**
- **public ownership and democratic control of public services, transport, energy, major industry, banks, N Sea oil**
- **a clean, green, nuclear-free independent socialist Scotland**



JOIN the SSP - the party of solidarity, public ownership and socialism

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