

Scottish Socialist Party



Party

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS VOICE



bosses concede talks in fear of strikes **KEEP UP THE PRESSURE**

The strikes threatened by PCS in the two giant departments - HMRC and DWP - on 31 January have been suspended.

The central factor behind the union's suspension of the action is that in both DWP and HMRC, talks have been conceded by management - which was one of the union's main demands.

In HMRC, far-reaching promises of a moratorium on compulsory redundancies, travel to work times and office closures have been given whilst talks are held.

Scottish Socialist Party members in the PCS, including leading branch officers in both departments, welcome the concession of talks and moratorium - won by the planned strikes and overtime bans.

However, we also think this is a decisive time to keep up the pressure on the bosses and the crisis-ridden Labour government who are dictating cuts to pay, jobs, offices, flexi-time and public services.

In **DWP** there initially seemed to be no progress in response to the two-day December strikes, but now talks on pay have been conceded. Management doubtless feared the impact of the action planned. Members in the big office factories especially are calling for an overtime ban as a powerful weapon, given the heavy reliance on overtime to get services delivered in understaffed offices after Labour's job cuts

of the past 3 years.

The talks must now be held over a very short timescale - and the union should warn of new strike dates and overtime ban should they be delayed or fail to win real concessions on pay.

In the case of **HMRC**, talks have been conceded and accompanied by a moratorium on compulsory redundancies, moves to unreasonable travel-to-work distances, and office closures.

The HMRC union Group Executive Committee called off the ballot the night before the closing deadline. SSP members in HMRC welcome the talks and moratorium, and believe this is the result of the threat of united strike action and an overtime ban.

But we also feel strongly there is an URGENT need for car park/office meetings of union members to explain the situation, and to move motions at every meeting that welcome talks and the moratorium, but call on the union to initiate an immediate ballot for strikes and overtime ban if there are any delays in talks and/or failure to make real gains on key issues, including vitally important questions like attacks on flexi working arrangements (as well as the central ones of jobs, office closures, privatisation).

Keep up the pressure on bosses who have already made substantial retreats in fear of strikes and overtime bans.



Scottish Socialist Party members in PCS are calling for urgent PCS members' meetings to explain the situation that led to suspension of the 31st January strikes AND to involve members in a campaign of pressure on management during the talks.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Consider proposing urgent office/car park meetings of members.
- Consider a motion at meetings of members, branches and branch committees that:
 - (a) welcome the concession of talks/moratorium on compulsory redundancies/office closures/privatisation/unreasonable travel to work distances - won by the threat of strikes.
 - (b) calls upon the national union to implement an overtime ban and strike action [in DWP] or organise an immediate ballot [in HMRC] for an overtime ban and strike action if there is any delay in the talks AND/OR if talks fail to produce adequate concessions on all the key issues.

JOIN SSP 0141 429 8200 text 07899 732068 email ssp.glasgow@btconnect.com



"The main issue is redundancies. 13,000 jobs in Revenue and Customs have already gone with a government target of another 12,500 by 2011. But this issue is **closely followed by privatisation**. The government are not stupid enough to conduct outright, upfront privatisation, but they want to do it through a third party, and then eventually outsource and offshore the work - especially in the call centres. Remember the leak a couple of years ago that they planned this transfer abroad of call centre work in the DWP?

Office closures are a big problem we aim to fight. The employers have not yet finalised the list for closure, but they have previously named Blythswood in Glasgow, Coatbridge, Motherwell and Hamilton in what they mockingly call the 'Glasgow Urban Centre'. We have an agreement in HMRC that there must be **reasonable travel to work times**, no more than an hour. But the bosses try to claim you can reach E Kilbride or Cumbernauld from Glasgow in 30 minutes, which takes no account of real life traffic and our shoddy public transport system. They literally took a compass, stuck it in the middle of Glasgow and drew a circle with 25 kilometre radius round it, declaring that is OK for office closures and centralisation plans! The existing loss of jobs makes the workload unbearable for those of us who remain. **Staff face stress** because they get the irate taxpayers ringing up to ask why it takes 19 weeks before their case is even looked at, not dealt with. When I started in the Revenue a mere 6 years ago the cases were dealt with inside 4 weeks.

The Labour government's jobs cuts are crazy and illogical. Because they are de-skilling the work in Revenue, we are the one part of the civil service which is recruiting! We now have 12,500 in the call centres. So whilst they are shedding jobs in processing they are taking people on in the call centres - to deal with the irate calls from taxpayers that are caused by the staffing cuts in processing! Even the Taxation magazine, the journal of professional accountants, is now backing our campaign against the jobs slaughter, which shows how badly services have been damaged.

Another key issue for Revenue staff is the threat of removing flexi time. This is always the second big issue after pay in staff surveys. People with kids and care responsibilities only stay in the Revenue because they can use flexi. Now they started a pilot scheme of removing it in the call centres. They want the arrangement more akin to McDonald's, where they send you home without pay when it is quiet."

John Davidson, PCS East Kilbride Revenue Branch Vice-President (personal capacity)

The government's privatisation includes the Security Guards at HMRC sites across the UK - including some that store seized contraband! The real pirates are the New Labour privateers - out to hand over services to the rich for profit, and to hell with the consequences for people's jobs, public services, and public confidence in the security of data held on them.

DIFFERENT PLANETS

Gordon Brown has demanded public sector pay be restricted to increases below 2%, when inflation is between 4.4% and 4.8%.

Public sector pay rises are lagging behind the rest of the economy - with pay rises at their lowest since May 1998.

The threat of regional pay is also real; the Dept for Constitutional Affairs is trying to impose it.

The ongoing scandal of pay disparities of up to 25% for doing the same or similar work in different departments adds fuel to the anger of PCS members.

But that disparity is nothing compared to the chasm between the incomes of workers and bosses across society.

Bosses' pay rose by 37% last year - to an average of £2,875,000 for the fatcats of the top 100 firms.

On average, they enjoy **66 times the wage of 'their' workers** if salaries alone are accounted for, rising to **99 times that of their staff** if share options are added in to the calculations!

This is obscene, to put it mildly. A century ago, the banker JP Morgan, himself no pauper, said no company should have a boss-to-worker income differential greater than 20:1. So today's capitalists would bring blushes to even some of their own class's money-grabbing predecessors.

FIGHT TO WIN SECURE JOBS, WITH DECENT PAY - AND JOIN THE SSP TO CHALLENGE THE OBSCENE INEQUALITY UNDER CAPITALISM.

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