

Scottish Socialist Party



Party

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS VOICE



STOP THE CULL OF JOBS & OFFICES resist privatisation & profiteering

The Scottish Socialist Party extends unqualified support and solidarity to PCS members on strike against another savage assault from New Labour and their puppets in the DWP Executive Team.

DWP workers are mostly low paid, and stressed out coping with additional workload after 30,000 have already lost their jobs. Now we are facing added job insecurity with the announcement of a Business Plan that includes 12,000 further job losses and closure of another 200 offices (on top of the 600 already shut). Civil servants have been targetted, demonised, and attacked by New Labour in a succession of announcements and measures, particularly since Gordon Brown's proclamation of 104,000 job losses in July 2004, when MPs infamously cheered to the rafters at his declaration of war.

Chaos for those in need of help with benefits in our most deprived communities has been the result of Labour's slash and burn programme.

Centralisation of offices and expansion of the Call Centre culture means the sick, disabled, pensioners, unemployed, workers and parents find it almost

impossible to actually meet a human being that can deal with their urgent cases.

As staff cuts impact, backlogs of casework mount up. Phone calls go unanswered. Frustration and anger sometimes boils over into abuse towards staff. Stress levels rocket. Centralisation of offices increases travel to work times, cutting into family life.

And the financial reward? Management imposed a pay-cutting 3-year deal in November wage packets, which means 40% of DWP staff get zero rise this year and a pathetic 1% in 2009.

This in the same department where £2.67billion has been squandered on private contracts. Where bosses enjoy chauffeur driven cars. Where consultants consume hundreds of millions of taxpayers' money.

And all that is before this new offensive!

The SSP has consistently fought alongside PCS members in your battles to preserve pay levels, jobs and public services. We will advertise your case across the wider trade union movement. And we will link this to the struggle for a society that puts people before profit, public services before the shareholders of privatised assets - a socialist society. **Join us!**



SSP public meeting

**Mon 17th March
after PCS rally (approx
12.30pm)**

Pivo Pivo bar

**15 Waterloo St, Glasgow
'STOP LABOUR'S WAR
ON PUBLIC SECTOR'**

**speakers: Gerry McMahon
(PCS DWP);**

a Shelter striker;

Richie Venton (SSP).

**meet fellow strikers, relax,
discuss the way ahead**

"This strike is no longer only about pay.

The announcement of 200 office closures, of which Scotland will get its share, makes it vital members support the strike action and overtime ban like never before.

The actions of New Labour on closing offices are an outrageous waste of huge sums of taxpayers' money.

New Labour spent tens of millions, probably hundreds of millions, transforming DHSS offices and the old Jobcentres into JobCentrePlus Offices. Even before the refurbishment programme is completed, New Labour adopt a slash and burn policy of closing JCP offices, many only recently refurbished. You couldn't make it up!

**Gerry McMahon, Glasgow DWP and PCS
Scottish Committee**

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Scottish Socialist Party - PCS members VOICE

"There is a terrible move away from decent customer services. In the past, these new offices were punted by the government as one-stop offices where people of working age - but also retired people - could get face-to-face advice.

"Now people who drop in are being chased back out

It's not just the JobCentrePlus offices that are in chaos from cuts. Pension Centres are also dealing with mounting mayhem and rising stress levels.

As a Pension Centre worker told us: "Masses of work has been shunted into Dundee and Motherwell offices. A few dozen extra staff are taken on and we are meant to deal with a workload transferred from offices that have been shut down in England, each of them involving

again, being told the Benefit Delivery Centre's number, or at best being offered an appointment in a day or two's time. When people are enquiring about a missing benefit payment, that delay can be absolutely horrendous for those living on the breadline to start with."

Edinburgh JobCentrePlus PCS member

hundreds of staff. It's a nightmare, for staff and people relying on the pension service alike."

And workers in the Child Service Agency are confronted with staff cuts and horrendous difficulty in gaining access to flexible working arrangements - a bitter irony, given that this agency is supposed to aid the support of children and families!



"On pay, long serving staff are treated the most shabbily. Staff on the maximum will get no pay increase in 2008 and 1% in 2009. This will be a pay cut of around 10% in real terms over 3 years. For members close to retirement this will be even worse; their pension is based on their last 3 years wages, so this will mean their works pension will be cut in real terms too.

Many other groups of workers have **pay progression**; council staff for example. However the funding for their progression comes separate from their yearly cost of living increase. In DWP and the wider civil service this is not the case. Any progression increases due to junior staff has to come from the yearly allocation from the Treasury. For example the Treasury remit for pay in the civil service this year was around 3.2 %. PCS reckon 2.5% of

this was used to fund pay progression for junior staff. **PCS rightly call for a separate allocation of cash to fund pay progression. We are not alone.**

Loads of departments have taken action against poverty pay, such as coastguards, DVLA and others. There can be no peace until we get a settlement in DWP. **We must unite with other depts taking action where possible to pressurise the government.**

We need national pay, to end the vast differences in pay for doing the same job in different agencies or departments. It is good enough for nurses and teachers, so why not civil servants?

The money wasted on consultants could easily keep all offices open, cancel the job cuts and give a decent pay increase to all DWP staff."
Gerry McMahon, PCS rep in DWP

THEM AND US

Bosses' pay rose 37% last year - to an average of £2,875,000 for the fat cats of the FTSE 100 top firms. They wallow in incomes 99 times that of their workers! **This obscene class divide is further highlighted by two recent reports.** One in four Scottish children live in poverty - but Forbes magazine Rich List declared Britain now has 49 billionaires - headed up by the Duke of Westminster, 'worth' £7billion!

The latest assault on DWP staff is designed to enrich the rich even more. The Business Plan is

based on the Freud Report, which stated "JobCentrePlus is a model of public service delivery" - but then went on to recommend privatisation!

Why? Because, as he let slip in the same Freud Report, **"Welfare is a £4billion market."**

Poverty and welfare is increasingly becoming a source of enrichment for the rich, who are already engorged from privatisation of huge chunks of the public sector.

The SSP has consistently stood with PCS

members in resistance to Labour's crazed drive to slash the public sector and workers' conditions.

We will campaign on the streets and workplaces alongside DWP workers to defeat Labour's reckless vandalism of public services, and continue to champion a different kind of society. One where people come before profit - where well-paid, secure jobs and expanded public services are funded by taking the ill-gotten wealth of the billionaires into public ownership.

We will sustain our fight for an £8 minimum wage, instead of the public subsidy given to employers to keep paying low wages, through Tax Credit.

Rather than drive people back to the dark ages of the workhouse, of reliance on charities for handouts, or of vultures from the private sector growing fat on benefits delivery, the SSP stands for a society where the safety net of a decent welfare state is funded from taxation of the wealthy and public ownership and control of the vast natural, industrial, financial and land resources of the country. **For a socialist future. And we appeal to all PCS strikers to join us and fight for that future.**

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

name..... phone

address.....

.....email.....

contact: SSP, Suite 308, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD 0141 221 7470

text 07899 732 068

email: ssp.glasgow@btconnect.com

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