

Scottish Socialist Party

Party

UNISON MEMBERS VOICE



DEFEND PAY & PUBLIC SERVICES

The Scottish Socialist Party extends solidarity to all UNISON delegates and visitors. We are proud to be Scotland's trade union party, to have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with every group of workers in struggle since our formation in 1998. To have pioneered policies that would begin to transform people's lives, such as abolition of all prescription charges; free school meals for all; free public transport to combat poverty and pollution; abolition of the unfair Council Tax and its replacement with a progressive, income-based Service Tax that would make 80% of Scots better off and still raise at least an extra £100m for local jobs and services.

UNISON meets as New Labour launches a concerted assault on 5.5 million public sector workers, trying to clamp down wages below 2% in 3-year deals.

The magnificent response of 400,000 PCS, NUT and UCU members on 24th April points to the united action required right across the public sector to beat off Labour's wealth transfusion from workers to the obscenely rich.

These 3-year deals should be rejected out of hand, and days of combined action built across the public sector.

PCS conference recently ramped up their opposition to any pay deal below 4.2% - the Retail Price Inflation figure.

For the first time ever, the 3 unions in Scottish local government have all rejected the 3-year offer, and are simultaneously balloting for united strike action.

This powerful potential weapon reflects the anger of 220,000 Scottish council workers at savage pay cuts in the teeth of rocketing fuel, food and energy prices.

Adding insult to injury, bosses' pay has risen into the stratosphere, with rises of 37% last year - to an obscene average of £2,875,000 (each, that is!). They now 'earn' 99 times as much as 'their' workers - a gaping chasm without precedent.

In fighting for the full local authority union claim, we need to highlight the demand for central government funding to ensure decent pay and holidays, without cuts to services - as well as equal pay without a single penny off the pay of any worker, man or woman.

They can hand the banks £50billion to bail them out, after the big 5 made £37billion profit last year. They can commit £100bn to Trident replacement over the next 50 years, and squander £6bn on wars for oil and empire. But they claim they can't afford to fund public services or public sector pay! This points to the need to tax the bloated rich minority - instead of the tax hikes on 5 million of the lowest paid that Brown's government tried, in tandem with their handouts to millionaires and big Corporations in tax cuts.

None of this will happen without massive waves of action by UNISON members alongside fellow-trade unionists - and not just in local government, but the whole public sector. The government is vulnerable; the time is ripe to force them to stop making workers the victims of inflation and the crisis in the capitalist economy.

Alongside the fight for a decent one-year deal in local government and elsewhere, a key issue is the minimum wage. The Scottish Socialist Party fought alongside UNISON and others for minimum wage legislation. But the level introduced by New Labour, the vast exclusion zones, and the youth discrimination embedded in law, all make a mockery of fighting poverty pay.

The SSP has consistently fought for a minimum wage for all workers, trainees and apprentices over 16 - based on the time-honoured formula of two-thirds male median earnings - scrapping the lower youth rates. This policy was adopted unanimously at 2007 conference of the UK's 5th biggest union, PCS. It was agreed as the aim at the recent STUC conference. UNISON should throw its powerful weight behind a public campaign to win this formula - thereby combating the poverty trap AND age and gender wage gaps.

The NHS, local authorities, education and all public services are under threat from the £30billion target 'Efficiency Programme', 3% annual cuts, alongside shared services, outsourcing, blatant privatisation, cuts to jobs.

As numerous reports prove, this has nothing to do with improved service delivery, everything to do with New Labour's ideological commitment to big business, capitalism and the pursuit of profit for the few.

So whilst fighting cuts, job losses and privatisation it is utterly illogical for UNISON and other unions to pour £millions of members' subs into the coffers of New Labour. It is like giving petrol money to an arsonist to torch your home!

Why fund the party of cuts, growing inequality, privatisation, anti-union laws, war? Labour's conversion into a party of naked capitalist interests is irreversible: John McDonnell couldn't even get 45 MPs to nominate him against Brown!

Supporting and funding New Labour - who preside over growing inequality, growing poverty, growing disillusionment, growing attacks on civil rights, is a sure-fire way of helping the far right exploit people's fears and grievances, whipping up racist divisions and attacks. The best way to counter racists and fascists is to inspire people with a vision of a totally different society, by actively fighting for decent wages, housing, services and an end to the gut-wrenching greed of the few who control the wealth under New Labour.

The SSP appeals to UNISON delegates to conduct a democratic review of the APF, break the link with Brown's New Tories and help us build a party that acts as a vehicle to carry out radical socialist change.

In Scotland, join the SSP - the one party which since 1998 has stood on the side of the working class and trade unionism, for people not profit, for an independent, nuclear-free, clean, green socialist Scotland.

JOIN SSP 0141 221 7470 text 07899 732068 email ssp.glasgow@btconnect.com

Scottish Socialist Party - UNISON members' VOICE

LABOUR BETRAYS WORKERS - make the break from Brown's new Tories - JOIN THE SSP

The working class have been politically dis-enfranchised, as Labour has transformed into a nakedly capitalist party, with no pretence of combining their worship of the market with representing working class people. Increasingly workers have awoken to the realisation that New Labour are the New Tories.

Whilst the biggest initial reaction is to abstain from politics and from voting in elections, a conscious minority of workers have seen the need to combine their efforts through the unions with the organisation of a political voice and vehicle for socialist change.

That is what underlies the formation of the SSP in 1998, our growth in the workplaces, unions and communities, our vote of 130,000, and our continued track record of uniting with every group of workers in struggle.

SSP FIGHTS FOR:

- £8 minimum wage for all workers and trainees over 16 - based on two-thirds male median wages - end age wage discrimination
- equal pay for women workers - without a penny off the pay of any worker
- a 35-hour maximum working week for all, without any loss of earnings - as a step towards a 4-day week
- abolition of all anti-trade union laws - for a positive charter of workers' rights, including the right to strike, to take solidarity strike action, to be in a union - without fear of victimisation
- for workers' control of health and safety through elected H&S reps
- a minimum of 1 years' maternity leave on full pay - with the job protected for return, and the choice of returning part-time or full-time without loss of benefits. At least 1 month's paternity leave on full pay - and the option of exchanging part of the maternity/paternity leave
- scrap all prescription charges - stop taxing sickness
- free school meals for all children in state schools - nursery, primary and secondary - permanently
- scrap the Council Tax - for the Scottish Service Tax, based on income, on ability to pay, raising more funds for jobs and services, and making 8 out of 10 Scots better off
- tax the rich and the big Corporations - no to the tax havens of New Labour AND the SNP
- reverse all PPP/PFI and privatisations
- public ownership of all services, transport, construction, banks, energy, telecomms, big industries, North Sea Oil - under democratic control and management
- an independent socialist Scotland that stands for people not profit, the millions not the millionaires.

"For the first time ever in Scotland we have the unity of the 3 unions balloting members for strike action. That is very encouraging and needs to result in a huge YES vote in the ballots.

We need a one-year deal - rather than being tied into pay cuts for 3 years without even an adjustment clause that allows for inflation. Industrial action has to be the cornerstone of the campaign - linking where possible with civil servants and teachers in England. We need to plan for more than just a token one day strike. This could include a rolling programme of nationally co-ordinated selective action where groups are taken out across the whole of Scotland for periods of time. For example, all traffic wardens one week, cleansing workers the next, nursery workers next, and so on. This could then be followed up by further one day all out strikes and further selective action."

Stephen Smellie, UNISON Scottish Committee (personal capacity)

"Fuel poverty hits 650,000 Scottish households, 4.4 million people across the UK. Experts predict a further 25% hike in fuel prices this year, driving another one million into fuel poverty.

Shell oil can make £14billion profit. The 6 big energy companies that control supplies of gas and electricity made £2billion profit. They rig the market, fixing price rises, preventing the idea of Uswitch being any escape. The best and only lasting answer to this scandalous profiteering at public expense (including thousands dead though hypothermia every winter) is democratic public ownership of the energy companies.

This would not only allow price cuts, but also investment in free insulation in every home to help tackle fuel poverty and climate chaos."

Jim Snell, Glasgow city delegate

"Some Lothians councils have backed off on shared services but it is still very much on the government's agenda, and Edinburgh is using it as an excuse for internal 'modernisation', making the voluntary sector tender for service provision and pushing through shared services across departments. This is a real threat to professional posts, especially in Social Work and Housing. They are slimming down and dumbing down posts, cutting jobs, replacing them with one-stop shops where less trained staff do a tick box assessment of people's many complex needs. Cuts in Home Care is a huge issue. The principle of enabling people is great, but in practice it means clients will only get care when they are in a critical condition. The union nationally needs united action to resist both forms of cuts to services and jobs."

Elaine Wishart, City of Edinburgh delegate (personal capacity)



"The 3-year NHS pay deal is still a pay cut.

I've just had my electricity meter read, and been told we have to increase our monthly payments from £52 to £66 a month. That's a 25% increase. My 2.75% rise and my husband's 3% won't even cover that increase in the cost of living, let alone other price rises.

What disappointed me most was the failure of leadership from the NEC, who didn't recommend 'Yes' or 'No' in the ballot. The wording of national circulars could in fact be read to mean 'vote to accept'. It was left down to branches. Our branch recommended rejection, but we only had a very short couple of weeks to reach members.

And I know several members who phoned up for their ballot forms, never got one, and now we know the ballot result. Or at least they say 64% accepted, but we still don't have the figures.

The national leadership should have linked up NHS and local government members, and combined with GMB and UNITE (who have voted 95% to reject), in united action to defend pay from inflation."

Margaret Bean, Glasgow & Clyde NHS delegate

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

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