



NEC ELECTIONS AND NATIONAL BALLOTS THE TASKS AHEAD OF US

PCS Socialist Appeal

supporters

The results of the elections for the PCS National Executive Committee were released a week or so ago. The Democratic Alliance was successful in the lay officer elections, and won all but two of the National Executive Committee members.

Socialist Appeal supports and is part of Left Unity, the socialist rank-and-file broad left that is the larger part of the Democratic Alliance. As a result, we welcome these election results and congratulate all those elected.

This is a remarkable result. PCS has been led by committed socialists from Left Unity for over 20 years. That members continue to support the current leadership of the Union for such a prolonged period of time is testament to the members' recognition that their union leadership fights hard to protect their interests.

Tasks Ahead

We know there is a tough period ahead. Conference will discuss the way forward for our campaign following the consultative ballot. Now is the time for the union to give a bold lead and call a legal ballot with the aim of holding a serious campaign of industrial action, not just a series of one-day so-called "protest" strikes that achieve nothing.

As such, PCS Conference needs to endorse motions that move the campaign forward to plan, organise and hold a ballot to win a mandate for real strike action. In particular, we need united, co-ordinated industrial action, not just in PCS but across the public sector.

Other unions face the same problems as us with cuts in real pay and cuts in staffing. The leadership of PCS newly elected by our members have a proud record of working with other unions. This is what will be needed in the struggles to come.

Turnout and Opposition

We know there was a poor turnout in the elections and the leadership needs to look at measures that will increase members' participation in the democratic processes of our Union.

It is true that the level of turnout is similar to that seen in other unions, so it is not a problem particular to PCS, but we should not be complacent. Demonstrating that PCS is a fighting union will increase the involvement of members, and an enthusiastic campaign around a legal ballot will help to do this.

The opposition to the Democratic Alliance in the elections came from two left organisations, the Independent Left and the Broad Left Network/Socialist Party; both organisations were heavily defeated.

The political differences between Left Unity and the Independent Left are minimal and appear to have emerged seemingly purely around personalities. The Independent Left need to work with the leadership of the Union on a principled basis to meet the challenges ahead.

Prestige

The Broad Left Network, on the other hand, is another split away from Left Unity by the Socialist Party and their fellow-travellers when they disagreed over the candidate for the Assistant General Secretary a few years ago.

The Socialist Party is set on a path of political prestige, seeking to gain positions in our union and others at all costs. In Unison they stood a candidate against the rest of the left and helped to hand the General Secretary position to the right-wing candidate, to cite one example.

We would question the seriousness of the Socialist Party's commitment to a good result in the recent consultative ballot. Once again it appears that they have been pursuing narrow sectarian interests and would have preferred if that ballot had been a failure, in order to have a stick with which to beat the leadership of PCS.

Time to Rise!

Such behaviour must stop, especially at a time when our members are facing the prospect of the government liquidation of tens of thousands of jobs. Ultimately, antics like these only help the employers.

Going forward, our aim must be to hold a successful legal ballot uniting members around a campaign of sustained, serious industrial action in coordination with other unions in the public sector. This will only be successful with a fighting socialist leadership at the head of our Union, giving a solid lead to such action.

We know the scale of the challenge ahead of us. It is now time to rise to the occasion. ■



WE MUST ORGANISE AGAINST THE TORY WAR ON CIVIL SERVANTS!

PCS workplace activist

Workers throughout the civil service have worked tirelessly to keep important public services running throughout the pandemic. Every single one of us can think of situations where we have gone above and beyond.

And what do we get in thanks? Yet more attacks, launched by a Tory government desperate to cling to power. Every day we see new headlines attacking us and the work we do. But if they think we are an easy target, they have another thing coming.

Job cuts add pressure

We have found out through the media about the government's plans to cut 91,000 jobs over the next 3 years. This will lead to brutal pressure on all fronts.

While this will be done through not renewing Fixed Term Contracts and not refilling vacancies from natural turnover in most situations, redundancies are also inevitable - otherwise, why are they now trying to cut redundancy pay?

We all know how much pressure our departments are under and what this means. As one-in-five jobs are under threat, on average, a team of 8 will have to do the same work as a team of 10 - with no extra pay.

In fact, the 2-3% pay award they want to give us will mean a pay cut in real terms, as inflation reaches 9%, and as fuel and energy bills skyrocket to eye watering levels.

Workers in the Passport Office, DVLA or DWP are already struggling with workloads and backlogs. The DWP, instead of expanding its workforce, is closing down offices, forcing some workers to commute unreasonable distances just to get to work.

This will only lead to more experienced staff deciding to pack their bags. It is one thing after another - the employer demands "savings" and "efficiency," and it is the frontline workers who are made to pick up the cost.



Tory contempt

Let's not forget about the cherry on the top, of course. The nineteenth century relic Jacob Rees-Mogg has reportedly been going around offices leaving condescending notes to the staff. This "Minister for government efficiency" has no idea about how things are in the real world.

But he is not alone in this attitude. The Tories hold nothing but contempt for civil servants, and the entire working class in general. As isolated individuals, however, we can do very little about it.

currently not in unions will soon follow. Faced with such a force, the government would soon find out who really makes things run in society!

PCS Socialist Appeal Supporters therefore say:

- **Support the 10% pay rise and pension overpayment campaign! Once we win, the confidence of our members will grow. This will lay the foundation to fight for a 15% increase next year!**

Once the organised working class shows how to fight, those who are currently not in unions will soon follow. Faced with such a force, the government would soon find out who really makes things run in society!

But this is what the PCS is for - it is our organisation, which we must use as a weapon to fight back collectively in the class war which the Tories and their capitalist pals are waging on us.

What is to be done?

It is evident in history that the only way for the working class to make any progress is to organise and fight back.

In this spirit, we support any emergency motion coming forward to counter this attack. More than this, though, we support unified action. On its own, PCS can put up one hell of a fight.

However, if industrial action was to be coordinated with the other public sector unions, it would be unstoppable.

Once the organised working class shows how to fight, those who are

- **We must save jobs and services! Every single Fixed Term Contract worker must be made permanent! Workers in temporary Covid and Brexit roles must be relocated to departments where their transferable skills are needed. This must be coordinated with the full oversight of PCS members.**
- **We must engage the reps, advocates and members at branch level in organising for the campaign. Open meetings must be held in offices and online, by all means necessary, to reach the widest layers of the Civil Service who are currently looking to our union for leadership.**
- **The strength is in our numbers - we must coordinate with other unions for a cross-union strike against this government's attack on the working class as a whole.**

If you agree with this, get involved with us today! ■

UKRAINE

FOR AN INDEPENDENT CLASS POSITION

John McNally

As the conflict in Ukraine enters its fourth month it is increasingly obvious this is a proxy war waged as part of an inter-imperialist conflict. It is the working class who will pay the price while profits roll in for the arms manufacturers and oil multinationals.

Domestically, Russia has silenced any alternative view of its “special military operation,” as has Western media which has waged an unprecedented propaganda offensive. Many workers, however, realise they are not getting the whole story.

Although still the world’s military super-power, the United States is in economic decline. It faces the rise of China, which has become a potent rival to it economically if not yet militarily.

As a result, the US seeks to reassert its dominance. It also aims to re-impose hegemony over the European Union and dismantle Europe’s economic ties with both Russia and China.

Hubris

America and its European allies played the key role in bringing the corrupt Russian oligarchy to power. Yet, in an atmosphere of hubristic “end of history” triumphalism, the US continued to view their newly installed Russian fellow capitalists as the “enemy.”

They went on to break nuclear treaties and aggressively expand NATO, culminating in the Maidan coup in Ukraine in 2014. This exacerbated already-existing tensions between western Ukraine and the Russian-speaking east, resulting in the breakaway of parts of Lugansk and Donetsk.

Along with the corrupt Ukrainian oligarchy the West systematically looted the country. Simultaneously America and Britain gave military “aid and assistance”, including arming and training far-right militias.

Zelensky was elected on a promise to resolve these tensions. Pressure from the US and ultra-nationalists, including openly

Banderite Nazi elements, put an end to this. Instead, his government has refused to implement the Minsk agreements, banned opposing political parties, attacked trade unions and the language rights of Russian and Hungarian speakers.

Proxy War

The US strategy to confront and provoke Russia through its Ukrainian proxy was both dangerous and stupid. Russia is economically smaller than some individual American states. But it does have nuclear weapons, and it has also forged an alliance with China.

Putin acted on the false assumption of a quick victory and negotiated settlement in Russia’s favour. When this expected collapse did not occur, the US seized the chance to weaken Russia through a protracted war of attrition.

As one American politician stated, the plan is to weaken or even defeat their rival without “losing a single American soldier” - in other words, to fight to the last Ukrainian.

America has poured in almost \$50bn worth of military aid, an amount that dwarfs Ukraine’s pre-war GDP and which - had it been used for peaceful development - could have transformed the lives of millions.

Rather than use its massive influence to broker peace, the US now hopes to

prolong the war. In pursuit of this “victory” they are also prepared to plunge Europe into economic crisis and risk famine in the Middle east and beyond as vital food production and distribution are disrupted.

Social Upheavals

If in response to Ukraine’s resistance Russia mobilises its full military potential, it would mean launching full-scale war in the Western pro-European part of the country.

Such a move runs the risk of solidifying anti-war opposition in Russia and posing a risk to Putin himself. Young Russian workers especially will turn on the regime if they are conscripted in greater numbers.

But it also means real dangers for the Ukrainian regime too. The western press is hiding the fact anti-war sentiment is rising in western Ukraine, with territorial defence members and their families refusing to be deployed to the front. At points when Zelensky has wanted a settlement, he has been warned by the US, Boris Johnson and the ultra-nationalists not to do it.

Splits are not far below the surface in Europe. The ruling classes there are preparing for the social explosions that will inevitably occur as the cost of living crisis hits harder while war spending ramps up.

A victory for either side in this conflict would be a victory for reaction. This is why socialists must hold firm to an independent class position and reject war hysteria. This must include arguing against sanctions, which do little to affect the ruling class and only hurt fellow workers.

The anti-war movement will grow, not just because we will it but from necessity that will develop from workers’ conditions. We call for workers in Ukraine and Russia to overthrow their own corrupt rulers, but our main task here in Britain is to build the greatest possible opposition to the Tories and the rest of the rotten political establishment, both in regards to their domestic and their foreign policies. ■



WHAT WE STAND FOR

The COVID-19 crisis, and the economic crisis that has accompanied it, are both expressions of a deeper general crisis of the capitalist system. Bold measures are required, and only a clear socialist programme can offer a way forward.

We must have no faith in the Tories or their hangers-on, whose worship of the market has brought the country to its knees.

- No trust or confidence in the Tories and their big business backers! Instead of attacking the left, Labour must provide genuine opposition to this shambolic Tory government.
- Support workers in the fight to put lives before profits!

The bosses and their craven political representatives have shown that they will always prioritise profits over lives. We demand socialist measures to protect workers, and put health before wealth:

- For a fully publicly-owned and free health service, under workers' control and management. Reverse all privatisation and outsourcing. All health and care services must be nationalised without compensation, and integrated into the NHS
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical companies – without compensation – in order to ensure that vaccines are produced rapidly and made freely available to all worldwide.

- Reverse the austerity inflicted upon public services.

- Workplace safety should be in the hands of workers' committees and the trade unions. Proper health and safety measures must be implemented, with adequate PPE provided for all workers. The costs for this must be paid by the bosses.

- To fight job cuts and the threat of mass unemployment, work should be shared out without any loss of pay, in order to lower the hours of the working week

- Fight for the real emancipation of women. Remove all barriers to women working: provide free nurseries, after-school childcare, and care for the elderly. End all forms of discrimination; equal pay for work of equal value.

- Scrap tuition fees and rents, and replace these with free education and full maintenance grants for all. Put staff in control in schools and universities.

- The financial resources required to fight the crisis must not come from increased taxes of more austerity, but through the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses. Rather than a 'wealth tax', we call for the expropriation of the monopolies

- Instead of building up the national debt through government borrowing, the money needed should be obtained entirely from expropriating the

accumulated profits of big business

- If the bosses say they can't afford to pay for workers' wages, we say: open up the books! Let workers and their unions see the accounts! If firms plead bankruptcy, they should not be bailed out, but nationalise under workers control

- No austerity! The working class must not pay for this crisis

- For the trade unions and Labour Party to organise a mass struggle to bring down this criminal Tory government. Organise the unorganised!

It is clear that the market has failed and capitalism is in deep crisis. The anarchy of capitalism prevents the planning of society's resources, in Britain and internationally.

We therefore stand for the nationalisation of the 100 biggest monopolies, banks, utilities, landlords and so on under workers' control and management, and without compensation. On this basis, the economy can be democratically planned in the interests of the majority, and not for the super profits of a few.

A Socialist Federation of Britain should be linked to a Socialist United States of Europe and a World Socialist federation in order to plan resources internationally for the benefit of all. This would put an end to the barbarism of capitalism and allow humanity to begin solving the urgent issues of climate change, disease, and poverty that face society and our planet. ■

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN US

Marxists are class conscious fighters for socialism. As Marx explained, we should be regarded as the most resolute section of the working class.

Marxism arms us with a conscious understanding of society and the class struggle. Only by absorbing this outlook can we lay the foundation for the overthrow of capitalism.

For us, Marxism is the science of social revolution and therefore needs to be studied.

Our tendency therefore stresses the need to educate and train our members in Marxist theory and the struggles of the working class. This gives us considerable advantages. First and foremost, Marxist theory is a guide to action, a guide to the class struggle.

As isolated individuals we can do very little. However, organised together

we can achieve a considerable amount. Organisation allows us to concentrate our forces to much greater effect. Based on correct policies and perspectives, we can intervene effectively in the class struggle.

The present reformist leadership of the labour movement has led to one retreat after another. In practice they accept capitalism and its limits.

The leadership of the Labour Party is now in the grip of the right wing, who serve the interests of capitalism. This revival is due to the weakness of the left to act decisively, which in turn is a reflection of the weakness of reformism.

Likewise, the reformist trade union leadership has failed to meet the challenges we face. They are lagging completely behind the objective situation. For them, it is simply 'business as usual'.

But the crisis of capitalism is posing massive challenges in front of the working

class. We will fight shoulder to shoulder with those prepared to fight. In doing so, we will point to the future needs of the movement.

Our task is to provide the necessary clarity for the struggle. Capitalism cannot be reformed; it needs to be consciously overthrown by the working class in Britain and internationally. That is why we are internationalists and proud to be part of the International Marxist Tendency. ■

