

Scottish Socialist Party



COUNCIL WORKERS VOICE



UNITE AGAINST PAY CUTS

vote YES to strikes for the full claim

The time is ripe to unite local authority workers in decisive industrial action to defeat the insulting

3 years of pay cuts on offer from the employers.

For the first time ever the 3 unions – UNISON, GMB and UNITE/TGWU – are all rejecting the offer and simultaneously planning ballots for strike action.

That unity is a powerful weapon and a reflection of the anger felt by over 220,000 Scottish local government workers at a pay deal that means savage cuts compared to spiralling inflation.

Pay settlements over the past 3 years have failed to match inflation. Now the employers – in keeping with the public sector pay freeze being pursued by the New Labour government – expect us to roll over and accept 2.5% for 3 years.

This when the official Retail Price Inflation is already 4.2%; the cost of everyday items like food, fuel and energy is rocketing at about 20%; and nobody knows how massive price rises will be in 2009 or 2010.

To add insult to injury, the bosses' pay is rising into the stratosphere, with average rises of 37% last year – to an obscene average of £2,875,000 (each, that is!), for the fatcats who run the top 100 companies. They now 'earn' 99 times as much as 'their' workers – a gaping chasm without precedent.

DEMAND GOVERNMENT FUNDING

COSLA chiefs bemoan the lack of central funding for decent pay rises. Well there's a simple solution to that! Why don't the councillors in the 32 Scottish councils join forces with the unions to demand massive additional funding off the Scottish government, to ensure the unions' full pay claim and additional holidays are met – as well as equal pay being implemented without a penny off the pay of any worker, man or woman?

And the new Scottish government should step forward, cough up the funding, put Westminster on the spot, and raise a hue and cry about the need to tax the rich

minority in society to help raise the funds required.

But none of that will happen without a massive campaign of protests and industrial action by council workers across the land.

Scottish Socialist Party members in the 3 unions welcome the overwhelming rejection of the 3-year pay cuts in the membership consultations.

ACTION PLAN

SSP members welcome the joint plan of campaign and ballots for strike action being proposed by the unions.

We believe a preliminary campaign should include a lobby of the Scottish parliament (preferably alongside NHS unions and the civil service PCS union – both of whom are also in battles against pay cuts); possibly lobbies of COSLA events; a petition carried out by members to present to the Scottish parliament Petitions Committee – to publicise the justice of our case and involve maximum numbers of union members.

We call for a resounding YES vote in the ballots.

We strongly believe maximum unity in strike action is the cornerstone of the type of campaign required to win the full claim for 5% or £1,000, with weighting towards the lowest paid, and increased annual leave.

A one-day strike by every single council worker in Scotland would shake the COSLA chiefs. But it should not be just a token one-off. It would need to be followed up by other action, such as a rolling programme of action by selected groups of workers in every council, each week – then followed up with further one-day strikes by everyone together.

Funding of strike action by the national unions will be critical to the success of the action, so that for example it is NOT selective action by one council at a time – but action in EVERY council EACH WEEK by selected groups, as well as the all-embracing days of united strikes by all 220,000 Scottish council workers.

With such a plan of action, WE CAN WIN! Imagine the power of all 220,000 united in action, with demos and rallies to win public support. And other workers are also on the brink of action on pay. NHS staff are rejecting 3 year pay cuts. 300,000 civil servants are poised to escalate their opposition to pay cuts. Teachers in England have been striking for the first time in 21 years.

The government is vulnerable; they had to cave in to the revolt against their doubling of tax on 5 million of the lowest paid workers. COSLA – made up of SNP, New Labour and Lib Dem councillors – can be forced into retreat as they compete for our favours at the ballot box in the years ahead. The new SNP government would like to retain popularity.

Stand firm and united. Build the campaign over June.

Vote YES in the ballots. Build for united strikes to win the full claim. Build links with NHS and civil service workers – including a joint lobby of the Scottish parliament. Demand Scottish government funding to meet the union's modest claim. Demand they put people before profit.

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Scottish Socialist Party - Council workers' VOICE

COUNCIL WORKERS SPEAK OUT

"For the first time ever 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.

Cosla's offer was rejected because it is too low and too long.

We need a one-year deal – rather than being tied into pay cuts for 3 years without even an adjustment clause that allows for unforeseen inflation.

Industrial action has to be the cornerstone of the campaign – linking where possible with NHS staff, 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)

"I deserve a better pay deal as I matter! I'm a care worker, but who cares about me? Without a decent pay rise I will be ill with worry. Will I have a roof over my head, have to cut my food bill, do without gas or electricity? We must end this potential poverty and unite together to fight for better pay."

Alison Kelly, Glasgow Day Service worker

"The bankers have been bailed out with £billions. There's a blank cheque for war and Trident. But families are expected to take pay cuts for 3 years while food and utility bills soar. We should fight for decent pay – and that will require a massive vote for united strike action."

Willie Campbell, Glasgow Social Worker

"The 3 year pay offer is derisory and insulting to workers. Fuel and food prices are rising astronomically, and we're told this is due to forces abroad and not in the government's control. Yet we are still told to accept our pay being restricted for 3 years, when neither we nor the government know how the economy will fair. We should reject this offer and unite with the teachers, civil servants and council workers in unions such as the T&G, GMB and PCS, in a campaign to win a better and fairer deal for hard pressed workers."

Pauline Bradley, West Dunbarton UNISON steward

"Some of our low paid members have worked out that this means an increase of a few pounds a week at a time when household fuel bills are up by around 20% and a loaf of bread costs about 7% more than it did a year ago.

Someone on £6.50 an hour who has to run a car will be using about a third of their weekly income just to fill the tank. When facts like these have been shared in workplaces the response has been encouraging - we are confident that a YES vote can be won for industrial action, and I might not have said that a few months ago."

Colin Turbett, chair of North Ayrshire UNISON

for richer, for poorer...

- £110billion to rescue Northern Rock
 - £50billion for the 5 big banks – who made £37billion profits last year
 - £6billion wasted on war
 - £100billion to be wasted on Trident replacement
 - 37% rise in incomes for fat-cats of FTSE 100 companies
 - Gas & electricity up 18-20%
 - Biggest food price rises in 14 years
 - Petrol prices rocketing
 - Public transport costs up
 - Public sector pay lagging behind rest of economy – lowest rises since May 1998
 - MPs on £60,675 – with rises of 127% over 17 years
- but pay offer of 2.5% a year for 3 years to council workers!**



"The council I work in is trying to remove shift allowances for evening and weekend working. This could mean many workers losing thousands of pounds a year and the additional expense of finding childcare. If the council can have staff working all sorts of unsociable hours for no additional cost, they most certainly will. Now our employers are trying to force a further pay cut on us by offering a below inflation settlement. Council workers are not paid wages at a level which can absorb cuts, year on year, without causing us financial difficulties. Our bargaining power as workers has been severely eroded by the removal of national negotiations on terms and conditions. This has resulted in local authorities competing in a race to the bottom. We must stand together while we still can, to fight this attack on our living standards. I for one am prepared to take any action necessary to fight for a decent and fair wage."

Gordon Scott, East Dunbarton UNISON steward

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

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