

PCS wins in the courts

# Court rules against government in CSCS dispute



Photos: Jess Hurd

The union has won a brilliant legal victory in the campaign to defend the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS).

On 10 May, the High Court ruled that the government had acted unlawfully when it introduced, without PCS's agreement, a new scheme which cut members' accrued rights under the CSCS.

The government had thought it could rip up members' contracts by imposing their new scheme on 1 April 2010.



This court ruling is a great victory for PCS members. It could not have been achieved without members' willingness to take action, including national strike action. The action raised the profile of the dispute and made it clear that we would not accept an imposed scheme. This generated fantastic media coverage and – together with the efforts of thousands of PCS members who lobbied their MPs – an unprecedented awareness of our case among officials and politicians.

The dispute is not yet settled, but the lesson is clear: action gets results. Doubters from other unions and our opponents in government told us there was no alternative but to accept the cuts. We were told by both Tessa Jowell, the Minister for the Civil Service, and Sir Gus O'Donnell, Head of the Civil Service, that “the time for negotiations has passed”. The Minister also told the House of Commons, during our strike action, that “there is no question of any further negotiation”. But now the new government will have to re-open negotiations with us.

The court's ruling does not, however, spell out the details of a settlement. The task now is to ensure that our legal victory is turned into an agreement that ensures the fair treatment all PCS members deserve, including those in the Nuvos scheme. So we must continue to campaign, lobby MPs, and build pressure on the employer. This will include, if necessary, further industrial action.

The new government will be seeking to impose cuts, attack pay and pensions, and increase privatisation. The first lesson it will have learned – just four days after the election – is that it cannot ride roughshod over PCS members.