



To: Branch Secretaries and workplace reps

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## **NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE/NDPB DISPUTE NEC CALLS CONSULTATIVE BALLOT ON NATIONAL ACTION**

**This briefing informs Branches of the National Executive Committee's unanimous decision to hold a consultative ballot on further national industrial action aimed at increasing the pressure on the employer to resolve the dispute in the civil service and related bodies. The ballot will start before the end of this month.**

The ballot follows our largest membership consultation exercise the union has ever held. Tens of thousands of members attended over 1200 meetings organised across the country and have fed in their views on how we should progress our national campaigning agenda.

Feedback from the consultation meetings was that members clearly accept the need for further national action to resolve the dispute, alongside other unions if possible.

The union has a legal mandate for industrial action following the national statutory ballot in January. In addition to the national consultation meetings, the NEC has decided that members should be

consulted again through a national indicative ballot.

Previous national strike action this year, on May 1 and January 31, together with action short of a strike, other campaigning activity including the Make Your Vote Count campaign, and the hard work put into discussions with the Government and officials has prevented many planned compulsory redundancies.

This builds on previous action which held back the government's cuts programme, defended pension rights and preserved paid sick leave.

Compulsory redundancies have now occurred in the former DTI and many of our members in various areas face being issued with compulsory redundancy notices at the end of this month and in October. On top of this, current pay offers include basic increases of less than 2%, including some at zero, whilst inflation is now at 3.8%. In the DWP a ballot on an offer has begun with a recommendation to reject.

Cuts are planned to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme which provides

reasonable benefits to civil servants who lose their jobs through redundancy or who volunteer to go on early severance or early retirement terms - the employer not only wants further job cuts but wants to get rid of workers on the cheap.

Everyone is under increasing pressure caused by underfunding, cuts, relocation and harsh management techniques.

### ***Negotiations***

We are continuing to use every opportunity to press for a negotiated settlement to the dispute. Both formal and informal meetings continue to take place with Ministers and Cabinet Office officials. These have included meetings with Peter Hain, Secretary of State at the DWP, Gillian Merron, Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office with responsibility for the Civil Service, and Andrew Burnham, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The General Secretary has also met with the Prime Minister as part of a TUC delegation. But the employer has so far refused to meet our fair and reasonable demands:

- Guarantees of no compulsory redundancies or relocations,
- Pay increases which at least keep pace with the cost of living,
- A national pay system to end unfair pay that sees staff doing the same job paid vastly differing salaries,
- No more privatisation and outsourcing without agreements to protect the workforce,
- Adequate resources and decent working conditions,
- No cuts to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Moreover, compulsory redundancy notices will be issued at the end of this month.

We need to apply more pressure for a fair settlement.

### ***National action***

National strike action should be used to cause maximum political pressure. It should be focused around relevant dates in the near future, such as the date of the Queen's Speech or the Financial Statement by the Chancellor, and be accompanied by protest and lobbying, so we can maximise our impact not only on the employer, but more importantly on politicians and the press. National action would need to be taken alongside targeted action on a Group basis aimed at building industrial pressure, for example over pay or compulsory redundancies.

### ***Discussions with other unions***

We have been exploring every possibility for working closely with other unions in furtherance of the dispute and for joint action with them if that is possible within the context of PCS's aims and objectives for the dispute. There are a range of ongoing discussions with other unions both within and outside of the Civil Service and some positive developments.

We will now use the opportunity of the TUC Congress next week to raise the possibility of coordinated campaigning with other unions. We will be moving a motion on our national dispute and a composite motion on public sector pay as well as holding a fringe meeting.

Our media and political work will also be stepped up, including local media and parliamentary lobbying, in line with the results of the consultation exercise.

### ***Time for action***

We need to escalate the campaign, including further national strike action

where and when it would have the greatest political effect, or to respond to management actions such as the issuing of compulsory redundancy notices, and including targeted action in Groups, for example over pay.

Therefore, the NEC has agreed to conduct a national consultative ballot of all relevant members to endorse a proposal that we hold further national strike action. The ballot to begin before the end of this month.

Special meetings of the National Campaign Liaison Group, made of Group Presidents and Secretaries, and of the NEC will take place following the TUC to finalise the arrangements for the ballot taking into account any developments and the results of discussions with other unions. A special NEC meeting will be held after the close of the ballot, or earlier if required, to decide upon the timing of the national action.

An all-member circular will be issued announcing the decision to ballot.

A range of materials and publicity will be produced to assist Branches and groups in campaigning around the ballot, including Group specific materials. GECs will be asked to meet as soon as possible to plan a campaign for a YES vote.

Please now hold discussions in your Branch to plan members' meetings, and other face to face contact with members, to build a good turnout and YES vote in the ballot.

**Mark Serwotka      Janice Godrich**  
**General Secretary    President**