



COALITION CUTS TO THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The PCS Group Executive Committee (GEC) met in Edinburgh this week to discuss the effects likely to result from the initial cuts in England and the detail emerging from the emergency budget that will affect the whole of GB.

The Committee looked at a number of reports issued nationally by the union. PCS will continue to press forward a campaign allowing members to take part in various actions to show their commitment to safeguard jobs, living standards and pensions. In order to organise the widest possible opposition to this government's programme of despair PCS is committed to working with other trade unions, campaign groups and the wider community.

Papers were introduced into the discussion that outlined details of the recent recruitment freeze and included the note from the DG explaining how the FC intended to meet the cuts. The documents make the supposition that, as the government put it, "We are all in this together" – Well not everyone is. The rich and those who don't pay their taxes are all immune from the cuts. Those who speculate on the financial vulnerability of economies, and have moved on to mainland Europe to attack the likes of Spain and Portugal, are immune from the damage that they leave in their wake.

We are all being bombarded with Cabinet Office information that puts a great degree of spin on the political dogma emanating from the government. Much of this is purely propaganda and must be recognised as such. PCS is very aware of this; members can find information to counter all of these statements on the PCS website.

PCS has a National Campaigns Liaison Group (NCLG), of which our Group President (Mary Irvine) is a member. They will be meeting very shortly to produce an action plan that will be discussed and approved by the National Executive Committee (NEC) on the 13th July.

The GEC is also formulating an action plan to make sure that all of our members in the FC can become involved and can support the struggle against the relentless attack on civil servants and public sector workers. The action plan requires some final tweaking but should be available very soon.

The only other business discussed outside of this main issue, but strongly related, is the setting up of a hardship fund for Forestry Commission PCS members. The hardship fund is partially designed to assist those who take industrial action in support of their union and fellow members but find that the financial impact as a result can at times be severe. An example of this would be a part time single parent who would normally only work on what it would be deemed as a strike day but would still need to pay child care for that day if they support the action but lose a day's pay as a result.

All members in the FC will be asked to donate to the fund via a direct debit mandate – further information on this will follow shortly.

The GEC are convinced that we need to have many more face to face meetings with our members and that where possible encourage non-members to join with us. We also recognise the need to engage with other unions, local action groups such as town committees and visiting our colleagues in other government departments. We should always take the opportunity to speak with our MPs. We need to look them right in the eye and ask them what they think about the way that the civil service and public sector is being treated. You can do this by visiting your MP's local surgery.

We are perhaps facing the most damaging period that any of us are likely to see in our lifetime as government brings forward all of these cuts and we lose jobs, see a real reduction in our standards of living, and our future pensions will be practically worthless.

Further information will be brought to members' attention as it happens.

