



PCS Leadership Abandons Membership

The newly elected DWP PCS Group Executive Committee, had its first meeting on the 24th June against a background of thousands of our members being bullied into returning to the workplace – all because the government wants to start putting public pressure on the unemployed. This is outrageous given we have all proved that our work can be done safely from home. Another example of the Tories putting the economy before workers' lives, let alone the claimants who are being forced to come into the jobcentres too. There has also been increased pressure for work coaches to see claimants in an unsupportive and frankly dangerous way, such as:

- Forcing claimants into the office when meetings could be done over the phone;
- Cramming in too many appointments into too many desks;
- 10 minute 'tick box' interviews meaning insufficient time to go into the individual needs of the claimants;
- The use of 'ghost diaries' to increase numbers being seen in the office; and
- The promotion of Kickstart interviews to 18-24-year-olds to get them off the books and into schemes rather than proper jobs.

Abject Failure of GEC Leadership – Branches Left to Support Members Themselves

The Left Unity leadership' response has been woeful. This was the same before the elections and is getting worse now they are all safely re-installed into their positions. Not only has their response following the membership ballot been pitifully slow, not meeting until the 24th June, some 3 weeks after the ballot result displays not only a lack of urgency but an abject failure to support members facing management's disgraceful tactics.

The union's group conference was a huge, missed opportunity to agree how the union was going to do the basic job of sticking up for members in our workplaces, following the 74% yes vote in favour of action. And collectively support and mobilise branches to build confidence and consciousness of the membership to vote yes overwhelmingly to win a statutory ballot to put safety first.

Broad Left Network supporters argued for clear demands and a clear strategy to build support in the workplace to increase the pressure on the employer to ensure safety is given the priority it should have both in the workplace and at home. Demands that include:

- 1.No forced return to the workplace. Any return and on what basis only in agreement with PCS**
- 2. Full safety measures to protect all members at home and in the workplace including supportive measures on mental health and stress.**
- 3. Work coach discretion about how members support individual claimants and by what method, with safety paramount.**
- 4. End micro-management and harsh implementation of ED - quality services to the public and equality must be taken into account.**

5. Permanent DWP jobs for those on Fixed Term Contracts and Brook Street agency contracts.

But yet again the Left Unity leadership have chosen path of 'hot air bluster' with management and failed to recognise the need to mobilise branches and members behind the negotiators to build pressure to collectively win the dispute. Effectively branches and members have been left to fend for themselves.

Hold BEC and Members' Meetings – Don't Kick the Can Down the Road!

The Broad Left Network believes that now is the time to hold Branch Executive Committee meetings and agree to call a series of members' meetings to put clear demands to members and build for a collective response against the employer's attacks on our members. However, yet again, this GEC are 'kicking the can' down the road twiddling their thumbs whilst our members are under attack. Why not galvanise the membership and use the collective strength of our union to turn outwards and demonstrate the members' anger and use this to build the pressure to back up any talks with the employer? That is what management would fear. BLN believes branches and regions should discuss and agree our demands and put demands on the GEC to act in support of our members on the vital issues to improve working conditions and protect safety.

Same Old Left Unity – Lack of Democracy

It's a new GEC but still the same old Left Unity. No democracy and no transparency. Advisory Committee posts were handed out to their friends without any discussion and no information about which branches had nominated which candidates. To stifle discussion, the basic rules in the Committees "Standing Orders" are not adhered to with detailed papers being issued at the last minute rather than the standard time of at least 5 days in advance. Whilst it is not always possible to get reports in on time this GEC leadership rarely if at all gets any reports in 5 days before. Instead Left Unity operate a mantra of knowledge is power and deliberately leaves sharing reports until the last minute. These are not the actions of a left wing, democratic union leadership.

Building the Left

BLN will continue to work to build a collective response involving branches. We would ask all those on the left to join with us on this. BLN supporters on the GEC were the ones putting the leadership under pressure at this meeting. We believe a united campaigning left union can make a difference to the membership as a whole and look forward to building campaigning links with all reps who want to see the union take a fighting stance and take members' interests forward.

Join BLN - For a Fighting Campaigning Democratic Union

If you would like to join the BLN and build an alternative to the GEC leadership, please email pcsblnetwork@gmail.com