

# The alternative

The monthly campaign newsletter from PCS | March 2011

**Welcome** to issue three of *The alternative* – a monthly campaign newsletter from PCS. Defend jobs, pay and pensions – attend the ‘March for the alternative’ in London on Saturday 26 March.

## Together we can win

Unions and community groups unite as opposition grows to slash-and-burn coalition

PCS members are at the head of a mass movement which is fighting government cuts, and defending jobs, pensions and pay.

They will fill scores of trains and coaches heading for London on Saturday 26 March to tell politicians that there is an alternative to the axe, as part of a giant trade-union organised demonstration.

PCS – along with unions representing teachers, lecturers and other public servants – is attempting to talk to the government on pensions and other working conditions.

But the Conservative-led coalition is determined to cut pay, slash jobs, and force impossible workloads onto the staff left behind.

Some union leaders are convinced that only a mass turnout on 26 March, backed up by a workforce willing to strike, can defend public services and public sector working conditions.

Opposition is on the increase with local trade union and community groups and campaigners from UK Uncut holding regular demonstrations across the country.

Roads have been blocked and town halls occupied as local authorities announced cuts to vital amenities like youth services and libraries that hold many neighbourhoods together.

Students and education



workers continue to protest over tuition fees, cuts to college funding, and the axing of the education maintenance allowance.

Victories are possible – the government backed-down on selling publicly-owned woodlands after half a million people signed a petition.

But 500 jobs are still under threat in the Forestry Commission and PCS and fellow unions continue to campaign for those workers.

Co-ordinated strike action

in defence of jobs, pensions, pay and public services is on the cards if the government hasn't shifted.

The PCS executive will meet just after the ‘March for the alternative’ to discuss holding simultaneous ballots for industrial action with other unions.

- Join the demonstration in London on Saturday 26 March
- Encourage your colleagues, friends, and family to join PCS or their relevant trade union.

### There is an alternative...

#### PCS is campaigning to:

- Defend jobs
- Defend pensions – no increase in contributions or retirement age, no cuts in up-rating
- Defend pay – a fair rise for all
- Defend public services – invest in communities, stop privatisation
- Defend the civil service compensation scheme.

#### The money is there:

- Every year £120 billion of tax is avoided, evaded, or uncollected.
- Instead of cutting jobs the Revenue and Customs should employ more tax compliance officers – each one collects £658,000 annually
- The government should invest in job creation in housing, transport and the environment to create economic growth
- Visit [pcs.org.uk/alternative](http://pcs.org.uk/alternative) to read the union's proposals.





# Be part of history...

Every PCS member who wants to preserve their pension, protect their pay, or save their job should – if they can – be on the streets of London for the ‘March for the alternative’ on Saturday 26 March

The coalition government’s key advisors know the banking crisis wasn’t our fault. In February, Mervyn King, the governor of the Bank of England, said: “The vast majority of people were in no way responsible for the financial crisis and down-turn in output, yet they are suffering a squeeze on real living standards.” Earlier this month, King added: “The price of this financial crisis is being borne by people who absolutely did not cause it. I’m surprised that the degree of public anger has not been greater than it has.” But the Tory-led government wants us to pay for it anyway. Chancellor of the exchequer George Osborne said in October that 490,000 public sector jobs would be cut.

In the past year, 11,000 Jobcentre Plus posts were axed – another 7,000 jobs are to go by March 2012. The strategic review will result in the loss of 25,000 civilian jobs in the Ministry of Defence. Cuts at the Equality and Human Rights Commission mean 250 jobs must go – 60% of the total. Revenue and Customs has chopped 30,000 staff in the past five years and plans 14,000 more job cuts. That leaves tax offices hopelessly understaffed as they try to recover the £120 billion of revenue that is avoided, evaded, or uncollected every year. That could pay a hundred times over to save the 10 coastguard stations and 200 coastguard jobs under threat. The

Photos: Karen Robinson

**“The price of this financial crisis is being borne by people who absolutely did not cause it. I’m surprised that the degree of public anger has not been greater than it has.”**

Mervyn King, governor, Bank of England

changes would mean that – for example – the north Wales coast was covered at night from a watch centre in Aberdeen. Pensions are also under attack. A major report – due out in mid-March – was expected to increase employee contributions to government pensions. PCS members will pay up to £50,000 extra

over their careers for pensions that will be smaller because they are being upgraded by a lower measure of inflation. A two-year pay freeze was imposed on public sector workers last June – and now inflation is running at nearly 5%. This arrogant cabinet of millionaires can be defeated. They were forced to abandon

### March for the alternative

- 11 am on Saturday 26 March, Victoria Embankment, London, WC2N 6NL
- Encourage everyone you know to attend
- Find more details at [pcs.org.uk/26march](http://pcs.org.uk/26march)
- Read economic arguments against the cuts at [pcs.org.uk/alternative](http://pcs.org.uk/alternative)

plans to sell off commonly-owned forests when more than half a million citizens signed a petition. Imagine the impact if twice as many people were on the streets on Saturday 26 March. If you have never been on a demonstration before – now is the time.

# ...join the ‘March for the alternative’ on 26 March

## Guess which government-owned institutions aren’t feeling the pinch?

The taxpayer owns 84% of the Royal Bank of Scotland. Unlike the rest of the public sector the loss-making bank’s are coining it in

**£45bn**  
The money the UK taxpayer spent in 2008 to stop RBS going bust – buying 84% of the bank’s shares

**£950m**  
Total of bonuses paid to investment bankers at Royal Bank of Scotland for 2010



Photo: Andrew Atchison

**£2.04m**  
Bonus – in shares – paid to RBS chief executive Stephen Hester. His salary is frozen at £1.45m per annum

**200**  
The number of RBS investment bankers who earned bonuses of more than £1m in 2010

**£1.13bn**  
The loss RBS made in 2010. Without the bonuses they would have been close to breaking even

**£29.03bn**  
The cumulative losses made by RBS from 2008 to 2010 – since the government bailout

## Why I'm going to London for the 26 March protest...



Photo: Jess Hurd

"I'm a passionate believer in public services. I'm proud that PCS is at the forefront of the battle to protect services – and to defend the pay and pensions of workers."

PCS general secretary **Mark Serwotka**, a former benefits office clerk, originally from South Wales



"My colleagues are struggling to cope as jobs are cut while the demand for help is increasing. I'm marching to defend jobs, services and the dignity of public sector workers."

PCS national president **Janice Godrich**, employed by the Department for Work and Pensions in Glasgow

For transport, campaign materials and more details see [pcs.org.uk/26march](http://pcs.org.uk/26march)

# Fight the pensions robbery together



By **Sarah Warden**, teacher and NUT union member from Bury, Greater Manchester

The government is attacking the whole of the public sector – so it makes sense for public sector workers to co-ordinate their reaction.

Less than three years ago, the NUT, the University and College Union, and PCS staged a co-ordinated day of strike action.

Joint rallies up and down the country created a mood of solidarity and an appetite for victory.

We will need the same again if – as is likely – public sector unions hold ballots for industrial action later this year.

Pension cuts provoke strong anger for teachers, many of whom are already being forced



Teachers protest against education cuts

to work for longer, after changes introduced in 2007.

The proposed additional changes, involving a 50% rise in contributions, would see an average teacher lose an additional £100 a month.

Manchester NUT vice chair Melanie Crossman said: "Teachers

and other public sector workers are attracting vitriol in certain sectors: viewed as scroungers and lazy good-for-nothings. We're seen as an easy target for a public suffering in the wake of cuts.

"Private sector pensions have collapsed and, rather

than improve private sector provision, the government is complicit in the creation of the myth of gold-plated public sector schemes.

"Teachers, like all public sector workers, know these don't exist. All we want as workers is to be paid fairly, to achieve a decent standard of living and to protect our right to a secure retirement after a lifetime of service.

"Trade unionism is under attack and all of us must come together as workers to fight."

Coalition costcutters like the idea of dividing public sector workers; if we splinter, engrossing ourselves in the smallprint of fighting for our own pension schemes at the expense of other people's, the results will be catastrophic.

Let the fight against the pensions robbery be one we enter together.

## There are loads of ways to help the campaign

PCS members are facing attacks on pensions, pay, and job security. The union will do all it can to resist this onslaught. And everyone can help.

The union's strength depends on how many members we have and on how well we are organised. People need to be informed and involved.

Even the most committed and efficient workplace reps can always do with more support.

Make sure you attend branch meetings and encourage colleagues to go to. It's the way

to stay in touch with union news and union democracy.

If you want to be more involved you could become a rep in a specialist area that interests you – like health and safety, or dealing with environmental issues.

There are lots of free PCS training courses to give you the skills and confidence you need to be a rep. And they also allow you to network with people from other places facing similar issues.

You could stand for election to a regional committee,

### Get involved...

- Volunteer to hand out union information – like *The alternative* newsletter. Start a conversation about it and help feed back members' opinions
- Encourage people to join PCS. Keep recruitment material in your bag, your desk draw, your locker – wherever it might be useful
- Remind people to vote in ballots and elections.

or a national one.

It's important for PCS members to support each other.

Someone with only a few seconds to spare can take part in the union's e-actions to raise important campaigns with MPs.

It's easy – if you have access to a computer you can find out the name of your MP, have a letter written for you, and send it with the click of a mouse.

- Find the current campaigns at [pcs.org.uk/eaction](http://pcs.org.uk/eaction)
- Find out about getting more involved at [pcs.org.uk/involved](http://pcs.org.uk/involved)