

31 January 2024

Message from Mark Serwotka

I retire today after 23 years as general secretary in the knowledge that, working with PCS reps at all levels and our dedicated PCS staff, we have built PCS into a campaigning, fighting union.

When I started out as a new GS, fresh from working part time in the DWP, PCS was in the grip of internal division. We suffered from a shocking attempt by a former general secretary's supporters to sack me as GS even though I had been democratically elected by the members. We beat the 'coup', as it was called, because progressive people across the union were united and we went on to create a union that members can be proud of.

Today we need unity in PCS again. Our members are facing a hostile government, a cost-of-living crisis and threats of job cuts, while we are seeing a worrying rise of racism and anti-migrant forces in wider society. The union will need to be strong and united.

Your new general secretary Fran Heathcote will build the unity that we need. Fran will be a brilliant GS, the first woman GS we have had. Her style of leadership is to build consensus wherever possible around the issues that matter to members. Fran is a serious, hardworking leader who will prioritise the fight for better living standards and working conditions. I am confident that PCS will go from strength to strength under her leadership.

The union is in the best place it has been for many years. We have withstood attacks on our union from Conservative governments and we are now growing. We are winning historically high votes in industrial action ballots which beat the Tory ballot threshold and we have developed an effective industrial action strategy for the future. We have young members coming forward to become a new layer of activists. Our financial position is the best it has been in years. If we can build unity, we will win more for members.

My heartfelt thanks go to all PCS members and reps.