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Minimum Service Levels: a transparent attempt to remove your right to strike

Vice president Pete Wright discusses the introduction of anti-union Minimum Service Levels legislation.

Last year members in Home Office delivered some of the most significant industrial action taken by PCS in recent years. Our members proved how effective strike action can be.

As part of our national campaign, it was a significant piece of work to get the industrial action ballot over the 50% anti-union threshold. However, members were so angered by the pay awards they had received in previous years that we not only met but well exceeded the threshold.

After we took targeted, sustained action at airports and maritime ports, along with action in HMPO, members received a pay rise of at least 5%, with the lowest paid members receiving over 10%. All members also received a one-off cost-of-living payment.

We have no doubt that the shift to this much-improved pay deal came about directly because of our members taking industrial action. The true value of our members' labour was evident by its absence during strike periods.

Sections of the media and the government would have you believe our industrial action had no effect whatsoever, with some newspapers reporting that the ports flowed better when our members weren't there.

This is a strange argument. If they can manage so well without us, then why have the government introduced legislation to ensure that our members are on the controls?

The minimum service levels legislation is a direct attack on members' fundamental human right to withdraw their labour when the employer is not

willing to listen to the trade union's representations. It will limit the impact of any industrial action taken, restricting our hardworking and dedicated members from fighting for their rights.

This is why PCS has launched a legal challenge to this legislation to ensure that we retain the right to stand together and fight for fairness and retain rights in the workplace.