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Editorial

Claire Keenan on why your union needs you to fight back.

HMRC is in a mess. The government's austerity policy has left us with an under-resourced workforce, often with the same work being done by different grades, on different pay, with insufficient staff to answer helplines on time. And with a third of us getting an instant pay rise each year because we're paid at the National Minimum Wage only – supermarkets pay their staff more! Face to face training, delivered by training professionals is a thing of the past, and all the while, data shows that work-related stress is at an all-time high.

The government now says it wants to reduce the civil service to 2016 levels. Jim Harra has told us that HMRC is already at those levels, but as one of the largest civil service departments, there are real fears that we may need to lose more staff, if reducing smaller departments to 2016 levels leave them as non-viable. This year has seen huge increases in staff either leaving the department or taking partial retirement, particularly technically trained staff. There are concerns we won't have resources to fill the gaps, seriously harming our ability to investigate tax avoidance and evasion.

The national campaign is calling for better coherence on pay bargaining across the whole civil service, and for restoration of the pay we have lost over the years when pay deals have consistently fallen below the cost of living. The national campaign calls for job security and for staffing levels that enable us to deliver vital services to the UK.

PCS has seen an increase in members of 27 years and under, joining us at a faster rate now than at any time over the past decade. Cuts in pay and staff particularly affect young people, who are literally the future of PCS and HMRC. Their issues will set the tone for negotiations to come on pay, pensions and jobs over the coming years.

Your union needs you!

It needs you to:

- Get behind the national campaign and post your ballot paper back – you only have until 13 May, but as last year’s postal workers’ industrial dispute saw, don’t leave posting back until the last minute, and remember you can’t vote online in an industrial action ballot
- Get angry and get active – your local branch needs all the help it can get, and if you can offer any help at all in leafleting, reminding members to post ballot papers back, talking to members about joining PCS, speak to your local reps about how you can get involved.

Claire Keenan – Editor