

22 May 2024

Paul Nowak tells conference: TUC stands with PCS members

The TUC stands “unequivocally with PCS members” who have been campaigning and taking action for decent pay, pensions and job security, its general secretary Paul Nowak told delegates in Brighton.

“If you win, we all win,” Paul said.

Addressing our annual conference for the first time as a guest speaker Paul said he’d been on many PCS picket lines over the last year, backing their struggle.

He also paid tribute to our reps who make a difference to thousands of members in our workplaces in their daily union work. Those members do jobs that the public rely on, he said, whether it's “collecting taxes that our public services desperately need, keeping our borders safe, or ensuring some of the poorest most vulnerable citizens get the benefits and the support they need”.

“Whether it's DVLA or the Passport Office or everywhere in between, you and your members are the people who keep Britain running and it's only right therefore that your members should get a fair deal for the work that they do,” he told delegates.

The Tory attacks on the civil service would be resisted once again, he said. The civil service unions and the TUC came together and successfully fought Boris Johnson's proposals to slash 90,000 civil service jobs and “we are going to fight tooth and nail against Rishi Sunak’s plan to cut 70,000 jobs” to fund increased defence spending, said Paul.

“These are back-of-the-envelope proposals that will damage our public services, undermine our democracy and do nothing at all for our national security. They must be defeated and I'm sure that if we stick together and fight together, we will defeat the job cuts as well.”

Political change needed

The TUC leader also spoke of the last year as being “momentous” with hundreds of thousands of workers standing together to fight back, pulling off hundreds of victories. He said in the last year he had stood on more picket lines than in the previous 20 years combined – including several PCS ones.

He said it was clear a political change was needed in the country, and that it was the TUC’s first priority to vote out “one of the most right-wing, incompetent, anti-union governments in our history”.

He said instead of trying to fix the myriad problems they had created in the UK, the government has spent the last one or two years attacking our rights at work.

On the minimum service levels legislation he said if any employer is stupid or reckless enough to issue a work notice requiring workers to break their own picket lines the TUC “will stand by any worker in the firing line”.

“We will defend the right to strike and we will defend any worker who exercises that right to strike; that’s the commitment of the TUC.”

While not everyone would necessarily agree with everything the Labour party says, Paul said a Labour government will deliver a new deal for working people that he believed would be “the biggest expansion of workers’ rights in our generation”.

The TUC’s next priority is ensuring that we get that new deal delivered “in full”, in the first 100 days of a Labour government.

Having recently returned from a solidarity visit to Ukraine, Paul also emphasised the importance of the global trade union family in this time of wars, the rise of the far right, and the “appalling” humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

On Gaza he reiterated the call of the global trade union movement for the return of all hostages, an immediate ceasefire, respect for international law, and a recognition that the only route to peace lies in a two-state solution built on a safe and secure Israel and a safe, secure and free Palestine.