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# So long Rwanda

Group secretary **Mike Jones** reflects on PCS' involvement in ending the Rwanda scheme.

July has brought with it a momentous change in government. The Labour landslide will no doubt have far-reaching effects for all of us in our personal lives, but as civil servants we will also see huge change in the work that we do. Many members will be optimistic of positive political change, with the “new deal for workers” being a real positive for all of us in the workplace.

However, as has already been demonstrated through the new Prime Minister's warnings about restrictions in public sector pay, it's inevitable that we will still need to fight for furthering our rights in the workplace and improving our terms, conditions and pay.

But there was an immediate change we all saw in the Home Office: the scrapping of the Rwanda project. This entailed offshoring both the consideration of asylum claims and the people making them and the outsourcing of our international responsibilities under the Refugee Convention.

As civil servants we are obligated to implement the policy programme of the government of the day however it's quite extraordinary to look back at the measures that were taken to force through a policy which may have brought our members in breach of international law.

Through our union we were also able to lodge serious concerns about the implications of the policy and to campaign for a different way of approaching the issue. PCS, in collaboration with refugee organisations, promoted safe and legal routes as a component in dealing with the issue of dangerous sea crossings, with the most desperate people exploited by criminal gangs. This is now an idea which is gaining traction.

After significant delays, millions of pounds wasted and a new backlog of cases, we can reflect, like the new Home Secretary did in her all-staff address, on a policy which was “a little batshit”. PCS will continue to campaign for a coherent asylum system designed to meet our international obligations, that is compassionate and

swift in assisting the most vulnerable in our society and that, as workers in the Home Office, we can be proud to be associated with.