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End austerity and give civil servants a pay rise, general secretary's call to Labour at TUC

PCS General Secretary Fran Heathcote used her speech to TUC Congress today (8) to call for pay restoration across the civil service and public sector.

In moving [composite motion 11 on public services](#), she told delegates that while the above-inflation pay deals agreed this year are welcome, they do not go far enough.

"We need pay restoration in our public services," she said.

"We accept that won't come in one year or even two – but we should collectively be calling for a pay restoration strategy across the public sector."

Below average

The motion, which was seconded by Jill Taylor from CSP highlighted the findings [of a report by Dr Mark Williams](#), commissioned by PCS, which confirmed that civil service wages were 5% above average in the 1970s and 1980s but are now 10% below average; and that pay levels have fallen by an average of 1.5% a year since 2011.

Fran welcomed Labour's commitment to "sectoral collective bargaining". "Well we need that to be restored in the civil service – where we have the absurdity and waste of 200 sets of delegated pay negotiations, when there should be just one," she said.

End austerity

She urged Labour to end austerity in public services: "Every single member of a trade union and every single person in this country relies on well-functioning public services – and our members who deliver them every day of the year.

“And we all know the damage that austerity has done to those public services and to the pay and living standards of our members. The backlogs, recruitment crises; the low morale and stress are something that all of us will be familiar with.

“Earlier this year PCS commissioned academic research on the economic effects of increasing civil service pay, and the results show that boosting civil service wages more than pays for itself through the benefits it would generate in the wider economy. And the same holds true for other public sector workers too – it’s not just civil servants that are magical – with the greatest benefits arising from boosting the wages of the lower paid.

“So, we expect this Labour government to end austerity in our public services and in the pay packets of our members. If this government wants the highest sustained growth in the G7, let me tell them they won’t get it without sustained growth in workers’ wages.”

Against a painful budget

She also warned the government against promising a “painful budget” and “tough choices” which, she will say, “means misery being heaped on working class people”. She also demanded the government end the gender, disability and ethnicity pay gap in the civil service.

Phil Clarke from the NEU said that: “Austerity is not over until public sector pay is restored.”

Jill Taylor highlighted that health inequality in the UK is soaring.

“People living in the most deprived areas are living a decade less than other areas,” she said.

She said that the public sector “needs a long-term funding settlement”.

Second class treatment

Margaret Haig from FDA said that for a long time the public sector has been treated as second class and called for urgent funding in public services.

Adam Sutcliffe from EIS highlighted the stress facing teachers in Scotland and across the UK. He also said that “public services in Scotland and across the UK are in crisis.”

"Our public services have been pushed to breaking point by years of austerity and the challenges created by the global pandemic," NASIWT delegate Jane Peckham told Congress.

She said the last government treated the public sector as a second-class career choice.

Kathy Smith from Unite highlighted the rampant privatisation in public services and called for it to end: "There should be no companies making profits from people. We need the profiteers to be kicked out of the public sector."

The motion, which was carried, called on the TUC to campaign for:

- radical improvements to collective bargaining structures and coverage across the economy, particularly in the public sector
- national minimum standards across all sectors on pay and terms and conditions
- a rise in the national minimum wage that ends in-work poverty
- an end to pay discrimination
- job security agreements
- removal of obstacles for trade unions to organise.

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