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Clock is ticking on Labour's New Deal promise

PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote says the clock is ticking on the Labour government's promise to deliver a New Deal for working people.

Speaking at a fringe at TUC Congress entitled "What Labour's Employment Rights Bill needs to Include", sponsored by the Institute of Employment Rights (IER) and the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom (CTUF), Fran Heathcote welcomed the government's scrapping of Minimum Service Levels, offering of above-inflation pay rises for public sector workers and the settling of the long-running train drivers and junior doctors.

"But," she said, "we cannot and will not be complacent."

She said PCS would scrutinise every clause in the New Deal legislation to ensure it delivers on banning zero hours contracts, ending fire-and-rehire and giving proper rights for all workers from day one.

"When Labour says its New Deal is committed to ending in-work poverty, we'll be making sure that includes its own workforce," she said.

While an above-inflation pay offer this year is welcome, our members have suffered years of real terms pay cuts – and around 2 in 5 are entitled to Universal Credit to top up their wages. The same people who administer the benefits are forced to claim them.

"Many of our most exploited members are on outsourced contracts, so Labour's commitment to 'the biggest wave of insourcing of public services for a generation' is especially welcome for the lowest paid. Our members in G4S working for the DWP contract are currently on strike fighting for fair pay.

"And finally we have to end the lunacy and waste of 200 separate bargaining areas in the civil service with strong national collective bargaining."

Fran also used the platform to highlight the victimisation of HMRC reps at Benton Park View.

“Empowering workers starts now by reinstating trade union reps in government departments who have been victimised to prevent them empowering workers to organise collectively,” she said.

She finished her speech by saying: “PCS is ready to play our part in delivering a New Deal for working people, and we’re ready to work with other unions and the Institute for Employment Rights to ensure that New Deal legislation is as robust and expansive as it can be.”

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