

9 September 2024

# **Bolder strategy needed to rebuild UK**

PCS has called on the Labour government to set out a bolder economic strategy to rebuild the UK.

In a lunchtime TUC fringe meeting today (9) organised by the Trade Union Coordinating Group, our general secretary Fran Heathcote said the need for immediate investment in public services was undeniable.

She called on chancellor Rachel Reeves to embrace a more radical economy strategy to achieve the government's objective.

She told the meeting at the Brighton Centre: "After 14 years of Tory-led government, I think we're all glad to see the back of Cameron and Osborne, May and Johnson, Truss and Sunak. The damage that has been done to our country, to our public services and to people's living standards is appalling.

"Like many of you I suspect, I won't be satisfied with a slightly less bad government. I want a government that will rebuild Britain, rebuild our public services, and rebuild our people's living standards.

But while politicians often talk about "'tough choices', when faced with them they too often pick easy solutions.

"We've seen this already. The decision to take Winter Fuel Payments away from more than 80% of pensioners is an easy solution. Many pensioners are struggling with rising energy bills - and many of those entitled to Pension Credit don't claim it."

Fran highlighted that we have one of the lowest basic state pensions in Europe, and around 2 million pensioners are living in poverty.

"But while working people, pensioners and children are all worse off, it's not been

bad for everyone these last few years," she said.

"We know that the bosses of Britain's largest corporations have increased their already colossal incomes, with the average FTSE 100 CEO pay jumping from £4.2m to £5m last year.

That's a 19% pay rise for people who earn more in one year than most workers earn in their entire working lives."

### **The money is there**

She said the money is there and it is a "choice whether you take it from hard-pressed pensioners, from strained public services or from greedy fat cat bosses.

"Austerity is and always has been a political choice, not an economic necessity," she said.

Labour MP and PCS parliamentary group chair John McDonnell said that while we were all elated to see the back of the Tory government we have "got to have a Labour government that improves the lives of people living in this country".

"We have got a housing crisis in this country on a scale we've not seen before," he said.

"We have got people living in poverty even though they are in work. And austerity is not a necessity, it's a political choice. We've got to say that's the end of austerity now and it will destroy the chance of growth in this country."

John said he was preparing to vote in parliament against the cut to winter fuel payments this week.

### **Push Labour to deliver**

Fran told the meeting that people cannot take more years of austerity, of falling living standards and crumbling public services. And she warned that politically there is a huge risk that rising disillusionment with politics opens the door to the far right.

"People voted for change and they want it," she said. "But unless things truly

change the far right is waiting ... mobilised and well-funded ... and with a seductive narrative that's it's all the fault of the other: migrants, benefit claimants, trade unionists.

So we have to push this Labour government to deliver: for our public services, for our members and for the wider public who rely on functioning public services."

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch called for progressive taxation policies and for the government to be bold and radical.

"We essentially need a fair economy which works for all our people, works for our communities and for our environment," he said.

Remember to check the PCS website, [X](#) and [Facebook](#) for updates and news from Congress.

[Watch Congress live online.](#)