

## **Submission to the Public Services Pay Commission from the Anti Austerity Alliance**

The Anti Austerity Alliance and the Socialist Party opposed every single attack on public service pay and conditions that affected low and middle income public service workers during the course of the crisis. As with the other impositions experienced by working people, pensioners, students and the unemployed the cuts to public service pay represented an example of ordinary people being made to pay for the economic crisis.

This crisis was fundamentally a crisis of capitalism but with its own special features in Ireland relating to property and banking. However at the outset of the crash in late 2008 a myth was propagated by the right mass media and the political establishment that public service pay levels were a causal factor behind the crisis in an effort to engender a sentiment among wider society including private sector workers for cuts to public service pay, pensions as well as numbers in the public service.

We rejected this analysis and in a succession of pre-budget statements our public representatives issued from 2011 to 2015 inclusive we have incorporated pay and pension restoration for public servants as well as a restoration of public service numbers among the necessary measures. Furthermore, we consistently campaigned for a fighting response from the public service trade unions to each attack and where ballots have been taken of trade union members on the various changes in pay and conditions we campaigned for rejection counterposing a fighting strategy on the part of the trade union movement.

We call for a total restoration in the take home pay of low and middle earning public servants up to those whose salary after restoration reaches a pay limit of €100,000 that we favour introducing in the public service

Specifically that means:

- The reversal of the pension levy that was imposed in 2009 which is a pay cut by a different name
- The reversal of the across the board pay cuts that were imposed during the 2010 budget
- The restoration of any allowances, annual leave and premia that have been reduced or removed since 2009
- The reversal of increases in the working week that are de facto a cut in the rate of pay
- The ending of the two tier pay and pensions system that has been imposed on new entrants to the public service
- A reversal of privatisations and outsourcings that will serve to bring back into the public service posts that were lost and a restoration of public service pay and conditions for those staff
- An immediate end to the recruitment embargo in the public service, which is causing horrendous suffering for members of the public; takes away job and promotion opportunities for young people; and creates huge stress for public sector workers.
- Restoring the retirement age of 65 or permitting retirement on a full pension after 40 years' service.

- The restoration of normal annual incremental progression.
- Restoring the half final salary pension index linked to future increases in the salary of the grade the worker belonged to on retirement
- A maximum annual pension of €50,000 per year corresponding with the maximum salary of €100,000 we advocate

Alongside the above pay and pension measures the so called Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill which leaves public service workers with less rights than private sector workers when it comes to resisting pay cuts should be repealed.

Besides the above we support further pay claims that serve to take account of the real cost in the rise of living as experienced by low and middle income public servants i.e. not just as measured by the Consumer Price Index but with full regard to the cost of accommodation, childcare and education which is not fully reflected in the CPI.

Restoration of pay must be accompanied by a restoration of working conditions by not just reversing the cuts in public service numbers which have wrecked many of our public services, not least healthcare but in fact numbers should be increased to a point that problems such as patients on trolleys, hospital waiting lists, the housing crisis and oversized classes can be eliminated because our public services are of a scale and are democratically organised so they are equal to the needs of society.

The Universal Social Charge, the Property Tax and water charges are three further impositions that affect public and private sector workers. We favour their abolition and our forthcoming pre budget statement will again identify how this and all the other measures advocated here could be funded through a combination of revenue raising measures targeting private wealth, corporate profits, employers PRSI, major financial transactions and taxation on household incomes over €100,000.

We call for an improvement in working conditions in the broadest sense including full trade union rights to be bestowed on members of the armed forces and Gardaí but that those rights be tied to a prohibition in the deployment of the forces of the state against other workers taking industrial action.

We support full civil rights for all civil and public servants including the armed forces and the Gardaí which means lifting the ban on participation in political activities and running in elections.

We have little illusion that the recommendations of the Public Service Pay Commission will be anything more than a very partial mitigation of the catalogue of impositions that have been imposed on low and middle income public service workers. Therefore while making this submission we state that the initiative for the speedy restoration of pay, pensions and conditions and the winning of further improvements in pay, pensions, recruitment levels, conditions of work and civil rights for civil servants that go beyond anything that has existed before rests with the trade union movement.

With that in mind we support the stand of the members of the ASTI who currently among the public service unions have gone furthest in seeking to reverse a number of the above listed attacks and earnestly wish to see them joined in struggle by their fellow workers.