

VOTE NO

to this divisive pensions deal

UCU members who are part of the Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS) are currently being balloted on whether to accept a new deal on pensions.

This will affect lecturers in the FE and in the post-1992 university sectors—the vast majority of these were ex-members of NATFHE.

The article in the new UCU magazine plays down the sting in the tail of this deal. In return for small concessions, the age at which college and university lecturers in the TPS can retire on a full pension is being raised from 60 to 65—not for existing members, but for all new entrants to the profession.

The proposal will, in effect, produce a two-tier membership of the TPS. Those UCU members who are in current membership of the TPS are being asked to vote to deprive future members of the entitlement to retire at 60.

The article fails to mention that, for these reasons, the ex-NATFHE National Executive Committee (NEC) consistently voted against any deal that raised the pensionable age for new entrants.

It voted in December 2005, and again in March and May of this year, to oppose this deal.

IT DOES NOT PROTECT EXISTING WORKERS IN THE LONG RUN

As the workers on the “privileged” right to retire at 60 become a minority then the government can attack their pensions, and they will be unable to defend themselves.

We saw this happen with the Silver Book contract. Already the government is trying to back down on this “concession” even before the ink is dry on the deal.

There is nothing to stop a future government coming back for those on existing schemes if we let them break our unity with new entrants to the profession.

IT'S A DIVISIVE DEAL WHICH WOULD CREATE A TWO TIER WORK FORCE

Trade unions are based on solidarity and generations supporting each other. We should not give up this principle.

When workers are on different conditions it is much more difficult to have workplace solidarity to defend pay and conditions.

This deal will divide every college and university, with some people retiring at 60 while their younger colleagues will have to work until 65.

THERE IS NO PENSIONS CRISIS

The report by the thinktank Tomorrow's Company, published in late September 2005, disputes the idea that there is a pensions crisis because people are living longer.

It points out that the “old age dependency ratio” which compares the number of people over 65 to those under 16, and indicates a 42% rise by 2041, should not be looked at in isolation.

The “economic support ratio” measuring the number of people not working compared to those in work is only set to rise by 1% in the same period – this suggests that more generous pensions could be provided without significant tax increases.

MONEY FOR PENSIONS NOT WAR

While pensions are under attack across the public sector, and the government is planning to raise the state pension age to 68, there seems to be a bottomless pit of money available for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. This throws the priorities of the government into sharp relief.

THE PENSIONS ISSUE IS ALIVE AND KICKING

Some people have argued that it is futile to oppose this deal because other unions in the public sector have accepted it. This issue is not going to go away.

There has been widespread opposition from rank and file trade unionists reflected in huge strike votes. The trade union leadership in the public sector unions have not capitalised on this anger.

Instead the TUC and the union leadership have gone for a “sensible compromise” which accepts a serious attack on the living standards of future members.

Either they have the choice of working longer with all the implications of stress, or they can retire earlier with less money. This is a compromise with the futures of future members to which no trade union should agree.

UCU should take a stand and organise with other teaching and public sector unions to defend the right to retire on a full pension for *all* workers.

The TAC should, moreover, accept the moral force that should bind it to adhere to the position taken by the ex-NATFHE NEC and Conference on this question, since it is overwhelmingly the ex-NATFHE members of UCU who are affected.

VOTE NO

Members, moreover, should vote *no* in the ballot.

We should not sell the retirement age of our future, younger colleagues for a concession to ourselves that will be snatched away as soon as the government believes that industrial action can be avoided.

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