

PUBLIC SECTOR PENSION NEGOTIATIONS IN JEOPARDY

The negotiations involving *GMB* and other unions with government over the future of public sector pensions have been thrown into confusion following announcements on Friday by Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, that government has already made up its mind to:

- Raise member contributions by 50%
- Raise scheme retirement ages, first to 66 then to 68
- Reduce scheme benefits by up to 30%

These are all matters that have been the subject of the joint negotiations and there has been no explanation from government as to why they should be making final decisions while negotiations are ongoing. Indeed there was further confusion as some government ministers over the weekend gave out a different message to say that no decisions had been taken and everything was still negotiable. It is, to say the least, a shambles.

GMB's position remains clear in that we are committed to genuine negotiations and to then put any proposals to our members for decision about acceptance or rejection and any consequent industrial action. But if government is not genuinely negotiating and has already decided to virtually destroy public sector pensions then we will not be able to stay in 'sham' negotiations and we will have to accelerate our preparations for an industrial action ballot.

So *GMB* deplores the pre-emptive statements made by Mr Alexander, deplores the confusion caused by mixed messages from different government ministers and calls on government to confirm unequivocally that negotiations are genuine, no decisions have been taken and they have an open mind on all issues covered by the negotiations.

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The next meeting with government is due to be on 27 June. That meeting looks to be in serious jeopardy unless we are assured that we will be listened to. The TUs are representing 12 million people in the LGPS, NHS scheme, PCSPS and other public sector schemes and their views deserve to be treated with respect.

Brian Strutton

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