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# **Fran Heathcote highlights union's successes as conference opens**

PCS president Fran Heathcote opened conference with a tribute to outgoing general secretary Mark Serwotka.

She hailed his success in turning the union around and making sure future leaders can build on his many successes.

And she highlighted the union's successes over the last year, including boosting membership, taking on immoral government policies and causing serious disruption in an ongoing campaign of industrial action.

Fran said: "Mark has carried us through challenging times giving us inspiration to stand up to employers and the government.

"His retirement will be a great loss to us but he will leave the union in the best place it has been for years and with a great foundation for the next generation of leaders."

The past year has seen an overwhelming vote in favour of industrial action across the country, with more than 300 days of strike action following.

This has in turn led to a boom in membership, with our ranks now swelling to 190,000 members, the highest since check off was abolished.

And more are now becoming reps and advocates, particular younger members and women.

But members continue to struggle with the devastating effects of spiralling inflation, now at a 40-year high - while the government insists on keeping wages down.

Our cost-of-living survey found 85% of members say the crisis has affected their health, 52% fear losing their homes and 8% have used a foodbank.

Fran said: “We are asked to believe the idea from government that it’s workers’ wages pushing inflation - it’s rubbish, pure propaganda.

“It’s the large companies such as supermarkets with price increases beyond the price of materials pushing shopping bills to record highs.”

Fran highlighted the union’s success in challenging the government’s plans to turn back boats full of refugees in the channel, and the continuing legal fight against the Rwanda deportation scheme.

She ended with a call for unity and solidarity, saying: “Pressure can lead to fighting amongst ourselves.”

[Read more news from PCS conference.](#)

#PCSADC23