

UK public service unions score major strike success

(Brussels, 29 March)

Across the UK 1.4 million public service workers took to the streets yesterday in protest against the UK Government plans to change the local government pension scheme. EPSU affiliates NIPSA, T & G, GMB, AMICUS and UNISON took part in the action. The day strike was extremely well observed with over 17,500 schools, as well as council offices, transport depots, libraries and leisure facilities witnessing strong picket lines.

The action has already provoked a conciliatory response from the UK Government with the Local Government Minister immediately scheduling emergency talks with Union leaders. UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis stated that 'the strike was the only realistic option as the Government was staying mute and Local Government Employers were refusing to talk'. It is expected that fear of further action will bring the employers to the negotiation table. For more information go to <http://www.unison.org.uk/>

Why the action?

The UK government has ruled that members of the uniformed police, armed forces, NHS, civil service and teachers' pension schemes - colleagues local government staff work alongside - should be able to retire at 60 and have their pensions benefits protected. Yet the UK government is willing to change the local government pension scheme for the worse, forcing us to work longer or receive a smaller pension. Contrary to inaccurate UK newspaper reports , UK local government workers don't retire on "fat cat" pensions. Women, who make up three quarters of the pension scheme members, get an average pension of just £31 a week. For many, pensions fall below benefit levels.

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