

PRESS RELEASE

1 of 1 page

Immediate Release

Attention: News desks, political, energy and Industrial correspondents

GMB AGREES TO ACAS TALKS OVER BRITISH GAS ENGINEERS PENSIONS DISPUTE BUT STRIKE DAYS STAYS IN PLACE

Following yesterday's successful strike among 6,000 British Gas Engineers who are members of GMB, the company made an offer to hold negotiations at ACAS on Wednesday (14th) and Thursday (15th) of this week.

Brian Strutton, GMB National Secretary said, "This could be the breakthrough GMB has been looking for. GMB is suspending the industrial action for the rest of this week to allow ACAS talks to take place. However, next Monday's (19th) planned 24 hour strike remains in place should the ACAS talks fail. I hope that won't be necessary."

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

1 6,000 GMB members working as British Gas Engineers took part in the first 24 hour stoppage today (Monday 12th December 2005) in their dispute with the company over their pension rights. The next planned days of action are **Monday 19th December, Wednesday 21st December Friday 6th January and Monday 9th January 2006**. These twenty-four hour stoppages take place from 7 a.m. to 7 am. In addition GMB announced that members will be suspending out of hour cover from the 12th to the 23rd December 2005 and from the 4th to 10th January 2006 inclusive. This covers the period from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

2 2 years ago British Gas/Centrica gave employees the right to choose to close their schemes or to pay an increased contribution rate to keep them open. This was done in a formal vote and British Gas/Centrica promised to abide by the result. The engineers voted overwhelmingly to keep their scheme open and have paid an extra 1% contribution. British Gas/Centrica is now reneging on that agreement after only 2 years. This has infuriated the engineers.

3 British Gas/Centrica claims that the pension scheme has a deficit problem. In fact, this is one of the healthiest pension schemes around and is fully funded. There is no financial reason for this change.

4 British Gas/Centrica closed its white-collar staffs pension scheme with promises that this would not affect benefits. Now they are trying to cut the benefits they promised to protect. The engineers believe the same would happen to them if they allowed their scheme to be closed and it demonstrates why they do not trust their company on pensions.

5 The engineers pension scheme is due to have a full valuation in 2007. The Trade Unions proposal to British Gas/Centrica is to review the funding and cost of the scheme in light of that valuation.