

Leading British trade union warns tens of thousands could strike over pay



Commuters walk across the London Bridge during the morning rush hour, amid an outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in London, Britain September 17, 2020. (File photo by

London, July 17 (RHC)-- The UK's biggest private sector union, Unite, has warned of a "summer of discontent" over pay, as the government is set to limit pay rises in order to curb the skyrocketing inflation across the country.

In an interview with the BBC, Sharon Graham, the general secretary of the "Unite" trade union, said ordinary workers have already "had a spring, summer, autumn, and winter of discontent for years" and there could be hundreds of disputes involving tens of thousands of people if workers are made to "pay the price for inflation."

A cost of living crisis along with surging prices has already led to growing public anger across the UK in recent months. The soaring food and energy prices have sent the UK inflation to above nine percent, the highest rate in the last 40 years.

Graham, who recently took over Unite, stressed that the government's plans to limit pay rises are totally "wrong" and "abhorrent." And she added: "Any employer who can pay, who has made profit out of workers, has to pay a proper fair wage to those workers."

A spokesman of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has said that: "With living costs at the highest level in decades, workers are understandably concerned about how they're going to cope with rising prices. Businesses too are being hit by soaring input costs."

Meanwhile, there are fears of a recession, with the Bank of England expecting a huge downturn towards the end of the year, with a contraction of almost one percent between October and December.

The development came on the heels of previous warnings by union barons who raised the alarm over a forthcoming national strike, demanding pay rises. Heads of the RMT and Aslef unions have called on workers "across the economy" including NHS staff, postal workers, and teachers to "stand together."

According to the Aslef union, nine out of ten members want to walk out over pay, but Britain's unions are edging towards coordinated strikes to create the first national strike since 1926.

Train drivers, civil servants, teachers, Heathrow staff, and NHS staff are all demanding pay rises of between seven percent and a whopping 30 percent over the next five years, with threats of strike action looming. Railway staff have already staged mass walkouts in recent weeks and strikes by more sectors are expected in the coming months.

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