

Thousands of UK Public Sector Workers Strike Over Pay



London, October 16 (RHC)-- Thousands of British public sector workers have begun a 24-hour strike demanding better pay amid ongoing pay freezes and government cuts. Some 250,000 members of UK's Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) across the country joined the strike on Wednesday. The strikers including workers in courts, job centers and museums called for better pay amid a fall in real-term wages over the past years. According to the union, many of its members have been hit by a 20-percent real-term pay cut since 2010 due to the Tory-led Conservative government's pay freeze and a one-percent raise cap.

"We're dealing with a lot of hardship cases. People are having real difficulties in getting through the month. We are just trying to attempt to avoid a pay cut," said Russell Carr, a PCS branch organizer. In addition, the union said low-paid public sector workers have been forced to claim in-work benefits in order to make ends meet.

"This is the seventh year of a freeze, or below-inflation increase, for DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) workers, 40 percent of whom are now claiming working family tax credits and other low-income benefits they are employed to administer," said Fran Heathcote of the PCS.

Meanwhile, a study for the Institute of Policy Research published on Wednesday revealed that an average British worker is £5,000 a year worse off amid the UK's stalled pay growth.

The current UK government launched austerity measures when it came to power in 2010 in a bid to tackle the country's mounting debt and sluggish growth, but the policies have sparked opposition and public protests in recent years.

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