

[The June 30th public sector strike is politically motivated and wrong](#) [1]

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The public sector strike called for 30 June is just political. It is supposed to be a protest against cuts in jobs, pensions and public expenditure. But real public expenditure is set to fall by just 0.7% this year ? a budget cut which most private sector firms and workers would take in their stride. If we don't want to end up like Greece, the government has to balance its books. It's doing just enough to trim its spending, but no more: it is going to keep on borrowing for as long as anyone can see.

As for pensions, public sector pensions are hugely generous and, even after the proposed changes, still will be. Private sector workers don't expect to get index linked pensions at just 60, as some public sector workers do. They may well be in difficult and dangerous jobs: but so are many private sector workers who have to slog it out until 65 (and soon, beyond). The Office for Budget Responsibility reckons that the gap between public servants' contributions and the pensions that are paid out will double to £9bn in the next four years. And we are all living longer. That's why the Hutton Report recommended basic contributions on average (rather than the often-inflated final) salaries, the same as they are in Sweden. It is why public sector workers ? but not the poorest ? will have to pay another 3%, and work just as long as the rest of us.

It's argued that public sector wages are lower than the private sector average, so the existing pensions are fair. Not so. Yes, there re lots of low-grade jobs in the public sector, which brings down the average. But for like-for-like work, public servants are better paid. They have more generous holidays, a lot more job security, and throw more sickies. And get more generous pensions too.

On jobs, the plan is to shave public employment by 100,000 by 2015. That's not a lot out of a workforce of 6,160,000. And many of those will be entirely voluntary redundancies. Again, millions of private sector workers who have seen their businesses fold, their hours reduced, their pensions and perks cut, or their jobs lost must wonder what the fuss is about. They think it is about time that public sector workers shared the pain.

And it seems that many public sector workers wonder what it is all about too. Yes, 61% of the public service union supported the strike, and over 90% of for the teachers' union ? but on turnouts of 32% and 40% respectively. In other words, this strike is being called, when negotiations are still in progress, with the active support of only a fifth of the workforce.

That is unacceptable in the public sector, because most public services are monopolies. If your local Asda workers go on strike, you can always take your business to Morrison's or the Co-op. If coastguard stations, driving test centres, passport offices, and schools close down, you have nowhere else to go. Certainly

people should have the right to strike: but in the public sector, perhaps strikes should be feasible only on a vote of more than half the employees.

A 'day of rage' it may be. But rage, I think, against the economic reality that the public sector jobs and spending spree is no longer affordable.

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