

8 September 2023

Huge support this week for PCS strikers in ISS

Five days of strike action by PCS members working in three major Whitehall departments was well supported by both members of the public and MPs.

Cleaners, security guards and support staff working for the outsourced contractor ISS at the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, the Department for Business & Trade and Department for Science, and the Innovation & Technology took action this week after being offered an insulting below-inflation pay rise.

At a time when inflation is running at 6.8%, members are angry at being offered a 2.2% rise, which represents a real-terms pay cut.

Lively picket lines were maintained throughout the week, attracting support from MPs, the TUC, nearby civil servants and many passersby.

The week started brightly and loudly on Victoria Street in central London, where dozens of members gathered waving PCS flags, carrying placards, blowing horns, leafleting members of the public, and dancing to music that was blasting out from a speaker.

As the week went on, their determination had caught the attention of MPs. On Wednesday, Kate Osborne, Kim Johnson, Chris Stephens, Andy McDonald, Olivia Blake, Beth Winter, and Mick Whitley were among the MPs who visited the picket line to show their support and send their solidarity.

“There’s irony in those cleaning the offices of the Government department responsible for employment having to strike against poverty wages,” John McDonnell, who also joined the picket, wrote on Twitter.

Richard Burgon, another MP who stood alongside our members, said that our members “deserve fair pay and we need to end the scourge of outsourcing”.

Meanwhile, in parliament buildings nearby, Mary Glendon, a Labour MP, asked the government on Thursday what they can do “to help resolve” this dispute and “to

end the race to the bottom for the pay and terms and conditions of vital workers due to outsourcing”.

A cabinet office minister responded to say that it was a matter for the employer and employees to resolve. The government simply does not care about its workers, whether they are outsourced or not.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that, last year, ISS made a profit of £73m, with 10 board members receiving almost £1 million between them in payouts.

One member, John, told us that “our employer makes almost a hundred million pounds a year and they are paying us peanuts. We have to put pressure on them because it is us who built this firm, it's the people like us on the frontline who built it.”

The current strike action ends today (8 September) but members are prepared to keep fighting through disruptive strike action if the employer does not offer a fair pay rise that can help them through the current cost-of-living crisis and beyond.

As William, a member who was on strike throughout the week, put it, “We are waiting for them to call us. Otherwise next week and the next week, we will continue [striking] until they sit down at the table with us.”

Show your support

- You can sign this petition to the Chief Executive of the Government Property Agency: [Pay your outsourced ISS workers their fair share | Megaphone UK](#)
- You can send messages of support to editor@pcs.org.uk
- You can make an [online donation to our strike fund](#).

Not yet a PCS member? [Join online today.](#)