

GLASGOW HOMELESS CASE WORKERS' STRIKE ACTION, 6.7.15

Jennifer, Ellen and June, Glasgow Homeless Caseworkers

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Jennifer, Ellen and June from the Glasgow Homeless Caseworkers were warmly welcomed to the meeting. Jennifer outlined the situation. Glasgow City Council had started an obligation to homeless people 12 years ago by setting up this service. Since then the job has evolved considerably and the workers applied for a re-grade - to Grade 6. This was refused and a grievance process started, their application has now been refused 3 times. Last year through UNISON, they balloted members on two proposals: a work to rule and an all out strike. A high majority was returned for both actions. Consequently they engaged in work to rule for 12 weeks and then, as no result was forthcoming, they went on strike in March. They have been going now for 15 weeks - a long struggle but with total support.

They have been picketing, visiting TU's, going round the country talking to other workers. There are 70 out on strike. Meetings with GCC have delivered various offers - to re-grade 47 out of the total, then 54, and the latest is 64, but with various conditions such as taking away some management role and cutting frontline services. So some movement from management but they are sticking for everyone to be re-graded. Latest offer was for everyone to be re-interviewed for their job and re-graded if agreed individually. They are sticking for all to be treated the same. Pressure mounting politically within the Council - if agreed others will follow suite - can't allow them to win. A split in the Council. They are determined to stick this out.

There were 3,500 people on their caseload when they took strike action - this will have increased by another 1000 at least since then. Difficult to get publicity for their action - news and general media not taking their story. Daily Record interview this week is the first newspaper to talk to them.

Regulator coming out this week to see to see if statutory obligation is being met. Prevention work is being missed and vulnerable people not being housed appropriately.

Questions and discussion from group covered the following:

Politicians: Gordon Matheson, leader of Glasgow City Council has not got himself involved at all, James Coleman totally ignorant of the reasons for action and not supportive. Indicative of Labour's current crisis.

Cuts: Similar situation will arise in Edinburgh when Council has to make £109 mill cuts and 1000 staff will have to go. Need solidarity from other workers across Scotland - but the way LA services have been cut up and privatised has led to fragmentation and different conditions in each area. Harder to join in joint action. No one seems to be pulling it together. Union lacks courage and political will to challenge the grey areas of supposed 'illegality'. HR needs to be challenged as well. Suggestion to write individually to HR asking if each worker is to be re-graded.

Publicity: Be good to try the social media outlets like Bella Caledonia and the also the National newspaper - Contacts Jamie Maxwell journalist on the National and Mike Small editor of Bella Caledonia. Important news story re vulnerable people and children not being cared for and abandoned. Women for Independence could be approached. Wider connections: Important to see this dispute in the wider political, economic context.

To make the link with the LOBO loans that LA's have taken out - now paying 7 % interest, Edinburgh and Glasgow involved - money that could be going to frontline services, going to banks such as RBS and Barclays. Maybe picket outside RBS in Glasgow to catch interest and curiosity of public? (see Dispatches Channel 4 wed 8th July 8pm)

To take inspiration from the success of the Dundee porters who have achieved a 7% pay rise and all given permanent posts. £91 collection taken.

For more information go to:- www.glasgowcityunison.co.uk