

WORKERS IN GHANA DEMONSTRATE AGAINST MASSIVE INCREASE IN UTILITY TARIFFS



“Last Wednesday 20 January 2016, workers took to the streets along with other civil society groups in Ghana to protest the recent massive increases in utility tariffs, and calling on the government to withdraw the Energy Sector Levies Act 899 of 2015 with immediate effect.

Organised Labour had been negotiating with the government over the 59.2% and 67.2% increase in electricity and water tariffs introduced in early December 2015, when the government imposed a further 28% increase on petroleum product prices early January 2016 at a time when the world price of crude oil is in fact falling below \$30 per barrel.

The increases take place in the context of a debate around whether privatisation of the electricity sector will provide stable supplies of electricity. Failure to conduct regular maintenance and upgrades at power plants has led to chronic power cuts. In February 2015, President John Mahama had promised to fix the country's power problems before 2017.

In parallel, the inflation rate in December 2015 was at 17.7% and the government had only budgeted a 10% increase in salary for public sector workers for 2016. The expected 7% decline in public sector earnings combined with astronomical increases in taxes, levies and utility prices at the most difficult economic time of year for workers and the average Ghanaian brought workers together from the formal and informal sectors in a nationwide protest of the situation. Workers marched through the streets of Accra and throughout the country.

Organised Labour will be gauging government response and are likely to begin a nationwide strike if government remains intransigent.

For more information on PSI work on privatisation follow the link: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/issue/privatisation>

THE UNION OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNICAL PROFESSIONS – SOUTH ELECTRICITY SECTOR PROTESTS AGAINST THE NEW SALARY LADDER LAW.



In the light of injustice, poverty and corruption and lack of services, and the high cost of living, the union of engineering and technical professions-South Electricity sector(an affiliates of PSI) in Iraq came out in early November 2015 to express its rejection and condemnation of the government practices, among which the unfair new law of salaries ladder. By this law a large segment of employees will have their salaries reduced.

The union is calling to stand up against this law and demand the abolition of the Council of Ministers' decision to withhold risk allocations, by 75% that was granted to the employees since 2006. This allocation is of great importance to employees

who are providing a vital service to citizens and its abolition will be of great damage to a large number of workers exposing their lives to danger. The justification of the resolution under the pretext of overloading the budget is unacceptable. Previously the Iraqi demonstrated for the reforms focusing on the end of corruption, the recovery of the stolen money in the three presidencies, and not the reform of the salaries scales and allocations for simple employees.

According to the president of the union, Abbas Kadhem Rabat they protest to respond to this unfair decision and will undertake further action to demand : Recover the allocations of 30% for all employees in the Ministry of Electricity, Retain the risks allocation of 75%, to ensure the security and health conditions , for those dealing with dangerous and chemicals towers and transmission and distribution of electric energy, Amendment of the salary scale for staff of lower categories in addition to the above mentioned demands and to keep on the allocation for holders of technical and engineering certificates and Establish permanent contracts for day-workers, who most of them have been working for more than eight years.

PENSION FUND REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA LEAVES WORKERS UNHAPPY



The ongoing Pension Fund Reform discussed at NEDLAC has undermine the collective bargaining processes as enshrined in LRA .Workers were not consulted about this matter.

This New Pension Fund Reform is not only affecting the public service employees but all South African employees. Due to this changes the Provident Fund members will be affected as they will be given one third (1/3) of the amount as a lump sum and two thirds (2/3) paid off on monthly basis when the person is alive while presently, members are allowed to take the whole money when the reach the retirement age.

Another concern is that, both provident and pension fund members presently are allowed to take their accumulated funds when they resigned, dismissed or retrenched before the retirement age but as from 1st March 2016 under the new law, the members will not be allowed to take the money before they reach the pension age. The state will lock up the money until the retirement age. This new law is not applied retrospectively meaning the money that was accumulated before 1 March 2016 will not be affected by this lock up.

Workers who are already over the age of fifty five will also not be affected. The new amendments will be implemented gradually. It will take up to 30 years to fully implement the new amendments. This means that it will take up to thirty 30 years to align all employees into this new law.

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YOUNG WORKERS, THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW, TAKING CHARGE OF THEIR WORKING AND COMMUNITY LIVES RIGHT AWAY!!

STORY BY: PERCY N. MASUKU



Young workers in South Africa, in both the private and public sectors, continue to face problems of high job insecurity, precarious working conditions, low pay and are deliberately kept out of the collective bargaining process by way of contractual work and out-sourcing, hence they cannot join nor participate in trade unions. These and other problems further compound the challenges associated with the vulnerability of young workers in the workplace, particularly in public services, in South Africa. Young women workers in the public service also face numerous challenges, on top of the ones mentioned. These include sexual and other forms of harassment, and discrimination in the workplace. It is in light of these challenges that young workers in public service unions in PSI commit themselves to confronting these evils head-on for a better workplace and community.

These and other related issues were the centre of focus for the recently held PSI South Africa Young Workers' Meeting held on the 21st January 2016 at the PSI Sub-Regional Office in Johannesburg. This meeting is part of the effort to enhance the sustained implementation of the “*Strengthening the Role of Young Workers in Public Sector Trade Unions in South Africa Project*”, which started in the last quarter of 2015, and will run until December 2016. Regardless of domestic affiliation, these union leaders have come together to confront the common challenges faced by young workers.

The main objectives of the meeting were to deliberate on the various ways through which implementation of the project activities could be enhanced, through a clear operationalization plan, as well as through strengthening the coordination capacities of the Young Workers' Coordination Committee to pull all these activities together in the agreed timelines. Several proposals were tabled, including the need to have a focused approach to deepening an understanding of the various ways in which each of the various pillars of the action plan could be implemented. These areas are: education and organising; campaigns and awareness-building; research and information-dissemination; and international solidarity and exchange.

The amount of dedication, commitment and focus displayed by the young leaders in the meeting is overwhelming. Their commitment to their action plan shall definitely produce the positive results expected, and with the right amounts of support from affiliate leaderships, they shall certainly realise the expected outcomes of the project. The agreed line-up of activities certainly do indicate a high momentum for this year, and everyone in the Young Worker's Committee is looking forward to immediately picking up pace on implementation. The PSI Sub-Regional Office would like to also convey their heartfelt appreciation to the national leaders of affiliates who have made sure of the participation of young workers in this meeting.

Young workers in the Public Service Unions under PSI say no to Privatisation! Out-Sourcing! Corruption!

EVALUATION OF STRATEGIES IN CAMPAIGNING FOR TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES.



Despite the impact of the Arab Spring, public sector workers throughout North Africa continue to

face ongoing repression, denial of trade union rights, threats from reactionary social forces and neoliberal economic restructuring. As part of a PSI project supported by affiliates Kommunal and Vision of Sweden, unions representing public sector workers in Egypt and Tunisia met in Beirut Lebanon on 21st -22nd January to evaluate strategies in campaigning for trade union rights and quality public services.

Reports of particular note included: a civil service reform law in Egypt introduced by the military government was rejected by the parliament following months of protests and lobbying by Egyptian trade unions and in Tunisia the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the National Dialogue Quartet (of which the UGTT - Tunisia's national centre - is a member) has given unions in the country a renewed vigour in campaigning and defending social welfare. Reports of particular note included: a civil service reform law in Egypt introduced by the military government was rejected by the parliament following months of protests and lobbying by Egyptian trade unions and in Tunisia the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the National Dialogue Quartet (of which the UGTT - Tunisia's national centre - is a member) has given unions in the country a renewed vigour in campaigning and defending social welfare.

Public Services International is a global trade union federation representing 20 million working women and men who deliver vital public services in 154 countries. This is an electronic newsletter distributed by Public Services International Africa and Arab region. Your Comments, Suggestions and any information can be channelled to rita.arthur@world-psi.org

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