

The Equal Pay Strike - Myths and Reality

MYTH

The Unions agreed to the Glasgow pay system but are now suing against their own agreement

FACT

UNISON vetoed the Workforce Pay and Benefits Review (WPBR), walked out of the invalid job evaluations, protested to the council and launched mass litigation against the scheme. This is also reflected in the Council report implementing WPBR, which asked for consent to impose changes using mass dismissals if necessary. WPBR is not a union agreement, never was.

MYTH

If the unions had employed their industrial muscle on this long before now we wouldn't be in this position

FACT

No current Scottish pay system has faced more disputes and legal conflict than WPBR. There have been 14 separate WPBR disputes in 11 years and 10 strikes. Nearly 6,000 workers have been balloted in WPBR disputes and 3,500 have taken strike action. In parallel with the strikes there are 12,500 legal claims, many of which date back to 2008. Militancy is not the issue. The Equality & Human Rights Commission identified discrimination during a statutory investigation in 2010. They notified the council but the report was suppressed. Early action would have ended discrimination and saved money if Glasgow Councillors had kept on top of the dispute, but as Councillor Aitken correctly revealed, councillors did not meet to discuss equal pay between 2006 and 2018.

MYTH

The reasons for the strike do not justify strike action

FACT

Nothing agreed, nothing proposed and nothing offered. No wonder the members are angry. The parties agreed a joint timetable with clear stages or milestones at the start. In August the council missed their milestones, tore up the timetable and told the unions there would be no money until April 2019. We shared that information openly with the members, as a trade union should. The reaction was as clear as it was predictable. The call for strike action was overwhelming. This is a member led campaign and the members are angry. Very angry.

MYTH

The women don't know why they are striking because the union misinformed them

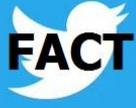
FACT

The members meet at least once a month to plan and execute their campaign. The members went to the Court of Session and there were 30 claimants at the recent tribunal. They know how the scheme was designed, they know about the EHRC cover up, they know the detail of the 42 point settlement plan and they know the council tore it up. They have battled through 14 disputes over 11 years and they know this is the end of a long battle. The women know the reason for the dispute because it was the women who called the strike. It's that simple.



MYTH

The unions know that council officers are carrying out the instructions of the council leader



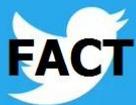
FACT

Cllr Aitken told the officials to end the EHRC cover-up and produce the report in full. In fact she told them three times. But we are still waiting for the truth behind the cover up. Councillor Aitken asked for a time table with milestones and dispute resolution. The officials missed the milestones, tore up the timetable and refused to go to mediation before 2019. Was that what the officials were instructed to do? We genuinely don't think so.



MYTH

Any delay in making payments is due to the strike, not the actions of the council



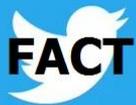
FACT

The claimants' representatives have been available to talk, without condition, since December 2017. It was the council who left the talks in response to the strike notice. The strike does not delay settlement. What delays settlement is the council's attitude to the strike - their decision to walk away shows a lack of respect for low paid women. Every dispute is settled by discussion. The only way forward is to talk.



MYTH

The union's escalated the campaign when the SNP defeated labour in 2017



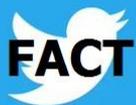
FACT

With 6000 workers in 14 disputes, 10 strikes and 8,000 legal claims the campaign was very assertive against the Labour administration. What escalated the scale and significance of the campaign even further was the Court of Session decision in August 2017. Labour presided over the WPBR years and the SNP administration has set a course towards equality. Accepting the Court of Session ruling and removing WPBR were strong decisions that have received credit from the workforce and their representatives. But the unions are clear - we are in dispute with the employer, not the elected members. Party politics is irrelevant.



MYTH

The union's are covering their backs for their discrimination over the last 12 years



FACT

This briefing sets out our actions. We vetoed WPBR before it was adopted. We commissioned the leading UK expert to analyse its impact after it was imposed and went straight to mass litigation. Every member received advice and we encouraged them to join the campaign. Although we lost the tribunal and the first appeal we kept fighting. In parallel with the litigation we organised Cordia workers against the discrimination within the ALEO policy and Cordia's daily practices. We closed Cordia down and took the workers home to equality within the council. Working with Action4Equality we had to change the law of equal pay to bring equality to Glasgow. UNISON organised the mass participation of low paid women and removed the discrimination of tribunal fees to restore access to justice for all - in Glasgow and across the UK. We succeeded where the EHRC failed. This is not "union back-covering". This is pay equality & pay justice.

