

Letter from EPSU Danish affiliates

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The public sector in Denmark is facing the largest labour dispute ever seen in this country.

For the first time all workers unions, who negotiate the collective agreements with the public sector have gathered around common demands, which take into account particular working hours issues for some trade groups and salary increases for low-paid workers and, in particular, for women.

After 10 years of financial crises and wage restraint, the trade unions have demanded a rise in real wage, which corresponds to the wage development in the private sector.

The public employers have responded with lack of willingness to enter any form of committed negotiations.

To put pressure on the employers, the trade unions have sent strike notice for about 10% of the union members, approximately corresponding to 100.000 people. This has been met with a comprehensive lockout notice, which encompass more than 440.000 public employees, thus resulting in a near shut down of the public sector in Denmark from the beginning of April.

The trade union movement fears, that the massive lockout, serves to provide the government with an excuse to intervene in the conflict and regulate wages and terms and conditions of employment by law. When the state uses its dual role as employer and legislator to enforce its demands, the negotiating system is in reality invalidated.

This is the reason why this conflict is not only about wages and working time, but about the whole concept of "free negotiation rights" which we call the Danish Model.

The unity amongst the trade unions now stands its test, and on the 22nd of March over 10.000 trade union representatives and shop stewards will gather for the biggest mass meeting ever held in the history of Denmark. The goal of the meeting is to plan the events and activities necessary to put pressure on the government and get the negotiations back on track.

We need all the support we can get. Nationally as well as internationally. We are asking you to be aware of the situation in Denmark, including to inform you members and media of the vital labour dispute occurring in the country.

We would be grateful if you would send a video message of a maximum of 30 seconds to our mass meeting on the 22nd of March, that will give us the possibility to show that trade unions across the world are supporting our fight. Email: foa@foa.dk



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