



PRESS RELEASE

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STRIKE ACTION TO COMMENCE AT SELLAFIELD NUCLEAR PLANT

The Northern Region's biggest general union has announced strike action is to take place at the Sellafield plant in West Cumbria.

The action, being taken by Health Physics Monitors on the Sellafield site is in pursuit of a better rate of pay through a re-grading process. The action will take place on Tuesday 28th July 2015 between 00.01 Hrs and 23.59 Hrs.

The GMB Union says that the issue of pay and grade for the Health Physics Monitors is something that has been rumbling on for at least fifteen years.

The Health Physics Monitors are trained in assessment of radiological conditions to provide appropriate radiological safety and advice to safeguard personnel, plant and environment.

The GMB Union, which represents the Health Physics Monitors, has been engaged in discussions with Sellafield management for a couple of years.

The Union said that matters reached an impasse with management after all parties thought that an agreement had been reached to settle the issue.

Chris Jukes GMB Senior Organiser said:

"Initially the Monitors received an uplift in their grade which led to a major problem with the recognition agreement on site.

"Subsequent renegotiations led to what we understood to be a situation that could lead to an increase in Monitor take home pay. However, in subsequent discussions around criteria for progression to a new rate of pay, it became clear to workplace representatives that there would be an unknown number of monitors benefiting from changes.

"Management subsequently refused to elaborate on their views of the criteria or the number of post holders who would go up in grades. The situation escalated when Management refused to negotiate further."

The GMB said that due to the impasse the GMB membership within the worker group of the Health Physics Monitors became extremely frustrated at the situation and it became clear in meetings of the workforce that there was a mood to take matters further.

The GMB undertook a consultative ballot of its members, by secret ballot, in March 2015 to ask its members in the Health Physics Monitors if they would be prepared to take strike action.

On existing legislation the turnout was 75.18% and of those voting, 97.71% voted yes.

If new proposed Trade Union legislation was in place the turnout would have been 75.18% and of those voting yes, that would have been 73.46% of the worker group.

As a result of the strength of feeling from the Consultative Ballot, the GMB then conducted a full Industrial Action Ballot, under existing legislation utilising the services of an Independent Company as Scrutineer, by secret ballot. The result of the secret ballot was announced on 6th July 2015 and it was:

Turnout: 83.76%
Voting Yes: 97.8%
Voting No: 2.2%

Under proposed Trade Union legislation that has just been introduced to Parliament, the results would have been:

Turnout: 83.76%
Voting Yes: 82%
Voting No: 18%

Mr Jukes said:

“Even under new proposed Tory laws there could not be a clearer demonstration of dissatisfaction by a worker group as to how this situation has arisen.

It is a crying shame that we have reached this position and there is huge frustration at the complete inertia that exists within the Sellafield culture and the lack of willingness by management to negotiate openly, transparently and with a view to the future.”

Mr Jukes added that unless there is a collective cultural change there will be an unsustainable position on Sellafield.

He said:

“We want growth, jobs and new build in West Cumbria. This problem of pay is a symptom of a much wider problem but the Monitors should not have to pay the price for a culture that has now become as much about personalities as anything else, with the back drop being seemingly a complete failure to communicate.

-Ends-

Contact points:

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