

‘Teachers’ Pensions: a Comment on the One-Day Strike’

by Francis Bennion

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Teachers’ Pensions: a Comment on the One-Day Strike

Hello, my name is Francis Bennion. This talk follows up my cautionary Video warning against the plan for a one-day strike on 30 June 2011, which was titled ‘Teachers’ Pensions: a Flight from Reason’. I won’t repeat now what I said in that Video. I hope you will refresh your memory by looking at it again.

Many sensible teachers who are members of the NUT or ATL ignored the strike call. Readers of the Daily Telegraph’s Letters to the Editor on 4 July were met with the headline ‘Strikers gain no sympathy from the hard-pressed majority’. B J Colby of Portishead, Somerset, wrote:

‘SIR – It is nonsense that public sector workers should expect to be immune from the job losses, pay and pension reductions that the majority in the private sector have been suffering for years. They have lived in a gilded cage and been insulated from reality for far too long, chiefly because Labour lacked the moral fibre to address the problem while at the same time pursuing a wanton spending spree. Now that the worldwide financial crisis is forcing massive reappraisal of all Government and industrial plans, the public sector need to bear their fair share of the necessary burden and realise we are all in this together. Protesting and marching is not the answer and will gain little sympathy from the hard-pressed majority.’

In the previous Video I suggested there has been a flight from reason in the actions of the unions. Back in 1970 it was immoral, and therefore contrary to reason, for NUT teachers, in order to further their personal financial advantage, to threaten to prevent school exams being held, thus causing their pupils great anxiety. In 2011 it was contrary to reason to ignore the fact that people are living longer and so drawing on more public funds by way of pension payments. It was contrary to reason to disregard the fact that the Coalition Government’s proposals are based on a thorough fact-finding report drawn up by Lord Hutton, a former Labour Government Work and Pensions Secretary. It was contrary to reason to jump into strike mode in the middle of negotiations (a stupidity noted by other unions, who sensibly preferred to wait and see). It was contrary to reason to ignore the Pensions Bill at present going through Parliament. It was contrary to reason for the ATL president to abandon his union’s 127 year anti-strike history on the unsubstantiated ground that ‘unless we take a stand now the Government will irreparably damage education in this country and children will lose out’. I could go on, but I will refrain.

Regardless of the truths I pointed out there are still threats to repeat the strike action on a bigger scale in the Autumn. I hope these threats will not be carried into effect.

In the previous video I appealed to viewers to join the anti-strike union Voice, which provides all the usual trade union services to its members. I repeat that invitation. I would also ask you to view look at my Video titled ‘Unison Threatens the Government’.

References

None