

Greek workers fight recession: bosses around Europe shit themselves

Over recent months, millions of workers in Greece have come out on strike again and again against attacks on their jobs, public services and pensions. Greek trade unions, under pressure from their members and from organised networks of rank-and-file workplace activists, have called three general strikes, and it is likely that more will follow. The general strikes have brought Greece's economy to a halt and have been accompanied by massive unrest in the streets, as angry workers and youth battle police.

Where has all this come from?
The Greek government is out of money. In the years before the big economic crisis, they borrowed a lot of money off richer European countries like Germany, to maintain public spending, splash out \$15bn on the 2004 Olympic Games, and keep up Greece's massive military spending. Defence spending in Greece in 2007 was \$1.3 billion. So, the Greek army, by buying up useless military hardware from richer

countries, has been channelling borrowed cash into the pockets of international arms. But now, because of the economic crisis, banks are less ready to lend. And international speculators are dumping all the Greek assets they hold, making the situation even worse.

The Greek government has got a problem - they've got to raise cash in a hurry. Do they tax the rich, nationalise the banks, seize the assets of big business, or just refuse to pay up? Err... no. They are doing what all good capitalist governments do in a crisis, and raising money by taking it off workers: cutting pensions, schools, healthcare, jobs, benefits, and wages.

What's at stake?

Now it's a straight fight - either the Greek government (led by PASOK, a centre-left party similar to the Labour Party in the UK) can crack down on the strikers and drive through these cuts - or the Greek working class can fend off the cuts.

In order to win, the Greek working class will need to create its own organisations - strike committees, rank-and-file groups in the unions and a political movement - so it can take

political power for itself. Workers who are in PASOK or PASOK-affiliated unions will also need to mount a fight against the PASOK leadership, and hopefully split the party.

Of course, bosses around Europe are cheering on the PASOK government's cuts, and grumbling that PASOK isn't being tough enough on the workers. That's because most other countries in Europe are facing big debts of their own, and bosses everywhere want Greece to set an example to other governments. If PASOK wins in its fight against the workers, it will send a message: deal with budget problems by stealing from workers. If PASOK loses, it will show workers around the world that we can resist cuts and win big. So rightwing newspapers in the UK have been screaming about "anarchy and death in Greece" and calling for "strong government" (translation: they want Cameron to make huge public sector cuts and use the cops and the courts against anyone who resists).

Workers' Liberty and *barricade* will be running reports on the situation in Greece and we will try to bring over a Greek activist to do a speaking tour. In the meantime, socialists in the UK should organise meetings in their workplaces, communities, schools and colleges in support of Greek workers. If you want help setting up a meeting, get in touch!



