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Earning less than a teenager at McDonalds

One of the APHA members working on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) explains why they are taking part in our targeted strike action.

I am on strike because contrary to public opinion, not all civil servants are paid well.

In the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) at my grade we get £10.14 per hour - less than a teenager would working at McDonalds. The government tells us they don't have any money but that's not true; they can find the money when they want to, they just don't want to be seen to be giving in to strikers. It's a vicious circle - we wouldn't be on strike if we were paid a fair wage, and so we have to use the only tool we have, which is to withdraw our labour - and strike.

My work is to do with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). We make sure that all movement, imports, exports and breeding of endangered species is legal and sustainable. That includes things like invasive species, zoos, ivory, plants, caviar, birds of prey, tortoises, reptiles, the luxury handbag trade, hunting trophies, taxidermy - everything you can think of. It's a really interesting job, no two days are the same. I work on the communications team, answering queries of every conceivable nature from all over the world. I love it, it's fascinating, interesting and really worthwhile: just rubbish pay!

MPs award themselves pay rises whilst taking all the glory for the hard work we put in at a much lower level. Lockdown taught us that we can do our jobs from home yet we have been lambasted by the press as lazy and workshy because we want to work from home. Ministers are keen for us to return to office buildings so that they can claim for their second homes and all the perks and expenses they get by having to work centrally.

The wider public needs to know they are being lied to and manipulated into believing the lie that people like us and our fellow strikers across many industries are 'bringing the country to its knees'. In reality it's the government and their

mis-managing of the public purse while they feather their own nests and secure deals to make them millionaires. They take second jobs that pay them millions while we have to take second jobs to pay our bills. There is a huge disparity between what they get and what we get, and we are only asking for a pay rise which we haven't had for over a decade.