Should Workers Be Allowed To Strike? Essay, Research Paper

It is difficult to see how anyone could deny that all workers should have the rights to strike. This is because striking gives workers freedom of speech. This is justifiable, because Britain is a democratic nation. My first reason supporting the motion that workers should be allowed to strike is in order to bring to the fore poor safety conditions. For instance, in the nuclear power industry, any breaches of safety can have tragic consequences. If the employees are exposed to nuclear material, this could lead to serious illnesses such as cancer, leukaemia and radiation sickness. Radioactive material could also affect residents of the surrounding area, as in the case of the Chernobyl disaster. In the light of poor safety conditions, workers striking can be justified by the fact that the government and public would be informed. Similarly, another justification for employees striking is that production and confidence would perhaps increase after industrial action. This could be because, when workers strike for higher pay or better conditions and their employers meet their demands, the employees return to their place of work with higher morale than before the walk-out. As a consequence, the higher productivity would be beneficial to the owners. Likewise, industrial action gives the worker a line of protest against unfair hours or miserly wages. Theoretically, if taking industrial action was outlawed, the management could impose any terms and contract changes that they wished on their personnel. On the contrary, in reality the only effective option that skilled labourers have when their firm underpay them is down tools and walk out. This would ensure that the proprietors would have to negotiate with the unions, as skilled workers are difficult to locate. Furthermore, if the workers belonging to one trade union walk out, the situation may be intensified by the fact that one trade union’s leaders can call on an allied union’s members to down tools. To this end, there are many ties – official and unspoken – between the trade unions. For instance, in 1926 when the Miner’s Federation received official notice of wage cuts for miners, the TUC (Trade Unions Congress) called on railway labourers, bus drivers and many others to strike in support of the miners. On the fourth of May, two million labourers walked out to strengthen the cause of the pit workers. Twelve days later, the strike was called off, and the miners kept going unswerving until Christmas. The strike itself was a failure, but for those twelve days in May, it showed how powerful the humble worker was; the whole country ground to a halt. On the contrary, some people would argue that industrial action causes disruption to the general public because of the amenities that are interrupted, for instance bus and train services. Although this is true, the disorganisation would turn the media spotlight on the employers, forcing them to give in to public pressure and accede to their employee’s demands. As has been noted, strikes are sometimes necessary for the public and worker’s safety. It is also often their only way of democratic protest against poor conditions and pay. It would be difficult to deny that walking out is morally incorrect. However, despite the ethics of the debate, industrial action is here to stay.