

# EDUCATION WORKERS' BULLETIN

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## STOP THE CUTS!

The city of Warsaw has announced new cuts in education. The proposed cuts will affect special therapy for handicapped children in pre-schools, will eliminate the maximum limit of children in a class and will cut jobs and working hours for school caretakers, cleaners and some administrative staff.

ZSP started protesting these plans and call on education workers, parents, pupils and other concerned people to take decisive action in protesting the cuts. It also maintains its calls for building towards a general strike of education workers and students.

We heavily criticize the politicians who used campaign slogans related to improving education and now make these cuts, as well as the general anti-social policies of the government. We stress that the cuts that need to be made are in the government, which we need to get rid of.

We point out how the government is conducting class war against those who are not rich and cannot afford



private education or bear the increasing costs of public education which are being put on families – books, which are not provided by schools, extra money for lessons not included in the budget, extra money for meals provided by private catering companies, etc.

We also strongly protest the growing precarization of teachers and other education workers who are forced to work on part-time, temporary or trash contracts.



### More Cuts for Teachers in Childrens' Homes, Youth Socio-Therapy and Youth Educational Centers

In January, city authorities met with directors of various types of educational institutions which are overseen by the city. At this meeting, they were given oral instructions about cuts they should make. They were told that they should lower motivational bonuses for teachers.

According to procedures, motivational bonuses should be given by directors, based on the performance of the teachers. However, given budgetary restraints, these bonuses are now given according to how much money has been received. And although the City Council set an average bonuses for teachers and this money should have been allocated in the budget, educational institutions of all sorts have regularly been receiving less.

This has been a situation many regular schools have been facing since last year. Last year members of ZSP protested with teachers from Mokotow who pointed out that they were being allocated less than half of what they should be for motivational bonuses. And their unions had already agreed to a 25% cut in bonuses with the city, which, during the summer, cut the average amount of bonuses even more. It became known to teachers also that money is allocated differently to different neighbourhoods in Warsaw.

See also: "Mokotow Teachers Screwed by Bad Deal with Unions" in Bulletin 1, Jan. 2013

## Cooks, Caretakers and other Education Workers



Last year it was the cooks. A number of schools in Warsaw were forced to close down their kitchens and outsource the work to private firms. School cooks, many who had worked for 30 years or more, all of a sudden lost their stable jobs, to be employed by catering companies. Of course these companies are not charitable organizations – so they keep a healthy profit, at the expense of the workers. To make matters worse, parents were expected to pay for this, widening the gap between richer and poorer families.

Parents and other concerned citizens protested this. Of course, the city has no competence in this area and this was strongly challenged – not by the unions, but by parents. And they were legally in the right. Only the city had a way around it: they said that the school directors could of course choose not to liquidate the cafeterias, but the city is in charge of the budget, so they are just cutting the funds. They were only then sending “recommendations” to the schools about what cuts they could make to run within their slashed budgets.

Now the caretakers are having their hours slashed. Administrative staff are being fired. Some unions have criticized this but no real action is being taken.

We are concerned that the government has decided to make drastic cuts in education, picking off the weakest parts of the education workers first: the auxiliary staff and the ones without teachers' qualifications. And we are concerned that unions have divided education workers into teachers and non-teachers, into full-time staff and casual workers. Currently, most of the education workers in the private sector, in the auxiliary jobs and working on trash contracts, are in no way organized.

ZSP is a union which joins all categories of workers, regardless of the job one performs, regardless of one's employment status. For a more information about the Education Workers' Union, contact us at [edukacja@zsp.net.pl](mailto:edukacja@zsp.net.pl).

## Specialists in Legionowo get 33% more Hours and No Extra Pay

The city authorities in Legionowo (a suburb of Warsaw) plan to increase specialist teachers' and education workers' hours by 33% but with no extra pay. The changes will affect educators such as speech therapists, psychologists and teachers of children with special needs. The raises in hours came after a control in which it was claimed that these educators have too few hours of real work.

The workers complain that already they are discriminated against, noting that their hours before the increase were 33% more than teachers have under the Teacher's Card. They also note that their average salary is only 2000-2300 zloties a month (500-575 euros), despite the fact that they need a dual qualification. They also argue that raising their hours will not mean more help for the children with special needs but will just burden the teachers more.

Educators demand negotiations with the authorities in Legionowo. These plans were announced just before May Day so we will see how this develops.

### Where to Look for Savings in the City Budget

1. Politicians. Warsaw has about 500 city councillors. What for? All decisions are made by the parties. The whole government can be liquidated and decisions made directly by citizens.
2. Cutting Down Trees In Parks. Nobody wants it. The city is spending a fortune in contracts, mostly with one company. Cut this out of the budget!
3. Gadgets the city buys for promotion. Most of these things wind up in the pockets of city workers and their friends and family.
4. New bus shelters to replace the old ones. They are not any better, just uglier.
5. Costs of servicing debts. The city really made crazy debts, including many unnecessary and overpriced investments. Cut this type of spending, cut debt. The costs of these debts are too big a part of the budget.
6. No compensation for property taken for use in 1945. This is just free money for people who were not even the owners. Mostly real estate speculators who bought titles profit on this.
7. Police. They don't do anything but annoy people and harrass street traders. Get rid of them. And stop buying them expensive gadgets and illegal weapons like LRAD.\*
8. Co-financing of any project which benefits private business, not the public sphere.

*\*LRAD is an illegal acoustic weapon used against demonstrators. The police purchased it at a highly inflated cost but is not allowed to use it.*

## **Developments with Authors' Contracts. ZSP Continues Campaign**

In the first issue of this Bulletin this year, we warned teachers about the use of authors' contracts. We distributed this information at several private schools and published it on the internet, passing it by mail to many workers and institutions. We were quite surprised that swift action was taken by the Social Security office on this matter, controlling some Warsaw language schools where they were using these types of contracts. Our response was somewhat critical. Below we reprint our response from the beginning of February and describe what happened next.

"At the beginning of the year, ZSP Education workers started work on developing a long-term campaign against the use of trash contracts in education. The first thing that we started on was informing about the use of "authors' contracts" instead of employment relations or even typical civil contracts. With these contracts, teachers were being paid for writing courses, instead of teaching them. So in fact, the contracts do not guarantee any wage based on time spent working and creates a big possibility of being cheated. The contracts also imply no working relationship and removes the responsibility of the school to make social security payments. We saw that this type of contract was being used to cheat workers and we targetted some foreign language schools that we knew were using them to begin with. A few weeks later, we were informed that the Social Security Office would do something about this problem. Critical of how the state acts, even when it is supposedly in our interest, we released the following statement.

### **ZSP Education and IT Workers on Control Related to Author's Contracts in Warsaw Language Schools**

Recently ZSP Education Workers pointed out how some educational institutions were using "authors' contracts" for teachers and what negative consequences this could have for them. In particular, we noted their use in a number of foreign language schools in Warsaw, where people were being cheated, especially foreigners. The Social Security office has responded by announcing that it would inspect the schools and see if these teachers are being denied their correct status. This is being done by this office because on "authors' contracts", the schools do not make social security payments.

Although we welcome measures to stop the use of these abusive contracts, we remain critical as to how the state acts in terms of workers' rights. At the same time that the Social Security Office is moving against these schools, which are predominantly small

businesses, tens of thousands of workers are also losing all or part of their social security payments in other ways, or being forced to bear the burden themselves. We cannot forget that workers who are supposed to make their own payments while forced to be fake "entrepreneurs" tend to pay the lowest contribution possible and often pay in much less to their pension than their real employers would have to. The Social Security system is losing tons of money through this and workers are losing parts of their pensions. ZSP points out the abusive use of this scheme plus the use of "authors' contracts" in the IT industry. This abuse is even used in huge multinational corporations which the state refuses to control.

We point out that while these schools may be punished for using these abusive contracts, the teachers may also be found liable, owing money to the tax office. We are strongly against measures which also punish those who were coerced into signing these contracts, especially as the majority of people are simply not aware of the implications.

Finally, we point out that all of these measures against abusive contracts do not counterbalance the fact that the state is casualizing the teachers' profession in a very systematic way, making the use of trash contracts in education more common. Controlling actions against a small part of the abuse while being complicit in the much larger problem of the attack on education workers does not exonerate the state in any way from their responsibility. The struggle continues."

We are still checking what the real results of the Social Security Office's intervention has been. We know that in the cases of two language schools, the schools responded by ordering any teacher who did not have his or her own business to set it up as a condition of continuing work.

In one school, we know that this has backfired. Since the teachers would have new bookkeeping obligations and would have to pay Social Security by themselves, they wondered why they needed an intermediary. They calculated that they would only be earning 50% of their money paid by the client and determined that the school – where they didn't work and which provided them with nothing – was just taking half their salary. We heard that teachers made a concerted effort to take over the clients directly and there are some conflicts about this. However, we are confident that the "schools" will not be taking these teachers to court, since it would be bad publicity if the clients learned about it. Since the clients also save money by dealing directly with the teachers who have their own business.

We are not satisfied with the fact that one type of abusive relationship was replaced by another.

There are absolutely no efforts made to combat fake "self-employment". This is something we cannot depend on the state, which turns a blind eye, to do anything about. We also see that this topic is very taboo and few people want to talk about it. It is a non-existent topic for most media and analysts of labor problem and, as far as we know, ZSP is the only labor organization which has taken any steps to expose this problem and fight against it.

We are gathering information from the schools, making contacts and keeping people informed. The main problem is the widespread fear amongst the precarious teachers that they will be unemployed and blacklisted. Another problem, although not the main one, is the number of foreign teachers who do not know their rights or who accept this situation as a temporary one, or who see little other chances for employment. We distribute information in English for these people and are considering new leaflets in Spanish for the next academic semester as we have a growing number of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, mostly young people from Spain. We also are considering further action campaigns for the fall, during recruitment and registration periods.



**Virtual Protest: Stop the Liquidation of Libraries**

You can sign a virtual petition here:  
[www.stoplikwidacjibibliotek.pl](http://www.stoplikwidacjibibliotek.pl)

## What is ZSP?

ZSP stands for Związek Syndykalistów Polski. It is a grassroots, rank-and-file workers' organization, run by the members themselves, without union bosses, professional activists or leaders.

Anybody who wants to fight for better working conditions and agrees with our principles and way of operating can join. The main thing is that we try to achieve our goals through direct action, decided directly by the workers. We are different than the mainstream unions because we don't create a class of union activists who decide for us and negotiate in our name: we do things ourselves.

You can read more about our ideas and actions on the official website of ZSP: [www.zsp.net.pl](http://www.zsp.net.pl). There are also other articles about us to be found on the internet.

## Not enough reason to strike?

At the beginning of April, Sławomir Broniarz, head of ZNP, gave an interview in Gazeta Wyborcza. Lots of critical remarks can be made about it, but one statement in particular stood out: that teachers don't have any reason to go on strike. This article is quite revealing while the ZNP has been known to criticize cuts in education, firings, closing of schools – but all of this is, for them, not enough reason to strike.

Last year we saw the liquidation of many schools around Poland. 7000 teachers lost their jobs. Precarious work is on the increase. Workers of Houses of Culture have had their institutions re-categorized and are no longer covered by the Teachers' Card. Some of them have to work 100% more hours to earn the same pay as before. This year, twice as many teachers will lose their jobs. More schools are being closed. And there are proposals, at least in Warsaw, to take away any limit for the maximum number of pupils in a class.

And still there is not enough reason to strike?

Or maybe somebody is afraid of any battle and spreads this fear around his union. And maybe the role of that union is to keep teachers under control, so they don't strike. One thing is certain, while thousands of teachers are facing unemployment and precarity, Mr. Broniarz earns many times more than we do for doing this job.

**ZSP – Without Bureaucracy, Without Comprises**

ZSP is part of the International Workers' Association. The IWA is an international federation of organizations which work on similar principles. It organizes workers in different workplaces and branches, including education. It currently has education workers' unions, networks and initiatives in several countries around Europe.

Contact us for more information at [edukacja@zsp.net.pl](mailto:edukacja@zsp.net.pl)

