

When HMRC's most senior staff strike for the first time...

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As [Accountancy Age](#) have reported:

An HM Revenue & Customs strike involving members of the Association of Revenue and Customs union is to take place on 14 February, over imposed quotas and new terms and conditions.

This has to be put in immediate context. ARC, which represents the most senior staff at HMRC (Dave Hartnett once told me he was a member) has never called a strike before, but have now over a new performance management system demanding fixed quotas - meaning 10% of staff fall in the bottom rating regardless of their performance - and new terms and conditions resulting in those who are promoted receiving a poorer deal.

As Accountancy Age again report:

The ballot received turnout of 48%, with nearly 60% voting for strike action and 78% voting for action short of strike - such as work to rule.

It so happened, and by coincidence, that I met ARC President Gareth Hills yesterday. His position was very clear, and is that these new rules hinder career progression in HMRC at a time when it is facing a demographic crisis as so many of its senior staff approach retirement whilst the new performance management system is demanding that staff divert vast amounts of effort that should be spent collecting tax into staff appraisal. Accountancy Age quote him saying the following, but he said much the same to me:

"Our members are not faceless bureaucrats, but real people striving every day to serve the government and the public. The work they do builds schools, hospitals, libraries and playgrounds. It's work that funds the social fabric of the UK and delivers for the nation. They deserve a fair performance system, one which allows them to do their job free from the tangle of bureaucracy."

I agree with him and his members. As such I think their strike appropriate and indication, yet again, of how far out of touch the senior management of HMRC are.

PS Apologies for lost of technical glitches in an earlier version of this post