67 The workplace

A An industrial dispute

Talks to **settle the dispute** between Royal Mail bosses and the CWU union have **broken down** again, so the union has decided, following the support of its members in a **ballot**, to set a date for strikes as early as next month. They claim it is not just a pay dispute, but an attempt to **halt** the **closure** of 2,500 post offices around the country. For the government, though, there is a great deal **at stake**. If the management **gives in** to the demands, it could **set a precedent** for other groups, who may feel more **inclined** to **step up** their own claims for higher **wage** settlements.

SPOTLIGHT *set + noun*

Set is used with many nouns and often means 'fix something for others to copy', e.g. **set a standard / a precedent / an example**. It can also mean 'decide on something', e.g. **set a date/limit**.

GLOSSARY

settle	put an end to an argument or a disagreement
dispute	a disagreement, often official, between people or groups: ***a pay/industrial dispute; settle a dispute***
break down	(of talks/negotiations, etc.) fail
ballot	a system of voting in which votes are made in secret **ballot** *v*
halt	prevent sth from continuing
closure	a situation in which a school, factory, etc. is permanently shut
at stake	If sth is **at stake**, you will lose it if a plan or action is not successful.
give in	agree to do sth that you do not want to do
precedent	sth that happened in the past which is seen as a rule or example for others in a similar situation to follow
inclined to do sth	likely to do sth or tending to do sth
step sth up	increase the amount of an activity in order to achieve sth
wage (ALSO **wages** *pl*)	a regular amount of money you earn, often paid weekly: ***a high/low wage***

1 Circle the words which suggest that something is stopping, failing or going wrong.

dispute give in step up break down
halt precedent closure inclined to

2 Complete the sentences with a suitable verb.

1 The manager _____ the standard for others to follow.
2 We must act now in order to _____ the dispute.
3 The union must _____ their members before they can go ahead with strike action.
4 The 5% wage settlement has _____ a precedent for other unions.
5 The government has failed to _____ the economic decline, so things look bad.
6 If their demands aren't met, some workers will _____ their call for strike action.
7 We mustn't _____ to their demands. We will fight to the end.
8 The negotiations started well but they've just _____ for some reason.

3 Complete the dialogues.

1 Is it the only factory to close? ~ No, there have been lots of other _____.
2 Are they taking a risk with the new IT company? ~ Yes, there's a lot at _____.
3 Why are they going on strike? ~ It's a _____ over pay, I believe.
4 Has this happened before? ~ No, it would set a _____.
5 Have they reached an agreement? ~ No, the talks _____.
6 What will happen if you leave? ~ I think others may be _____ to follow.
7 Is the dispute about pay? ~ Yes, basically they want higher _____.
8 Will they go on strike? ~ Maybe, but they must have a _____ of members first.

TEST YOURSELF

LIVEWORKSHEETS

B Working conditions

What **fringe benefits** can you expect from your job?

* a company **pension**?
* an annual **bonus**?
* health or **dental** insurance?
* paid **sick leave**?
* **maternity/paternity** leave?
* a **commission** (on certain jobs)

What **rights** do you have?

* the right to join a **trade union**?
* Are you **entitled to strike**?
* the right to a **minimum** level of paid holiday?

GLOSSARY

(fringe) benefit *(usually pl)*	an advantage you get from a company in addition to the money you earn SYN **perk**
pension	money paid regularly by a government or company to sb when they retire: ***a state/company pension***
bonus	an extra amount of money, often added to a wage or salary, as a reward: ***an annual bonus***
dental	connected with teeth: ***dental treatment***
leave	a period of time when you are allowed to be away from work for a holiday or a special reason: ***annual/unpaid/sick leave***
maternity	the state of being or becoming a mother: ***maternity leave***, ALSO ***paternity leave*** (for fathers)
commission	an amount of money paid to sb for selling goods which increases with the amount sold
right	a moral or legal claim to have or get sth or to behave in a particular way
trade union	an organization of workers that exists to protect its workers
entitle (sb to sth) *(often passive)*	give sb the right to have or do sth
strike	a period of time when an organized group of employees refuse to work because of a disagreement over pay or conditions: ***be/go on strike***
minimum	the smallest that is possible or allowed: ***the minimum wage/charge***

4 **Form seven compound words or phrases from words in the box.**

minimum	fringe	maternity	state	dental	go on	trade
pension	strike	wage	leave	union	benefit	treatment

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5 **Complete the sentences.**

1 Most countries have _____ leave, but not always paternity leave.
2 I've always belonged to a trade _____.
3 We only get an annual _____ if the company is doing well.
4 The workers are planning to _____ strike next week.
5 The company pays sick _____ up to a certain number of weeks.
6 When you retire, will you be _____ to a state and company _____?
7 I think most workers in the UK have a _____ to join a _____ union, but I don't think members of the emergency services can go on _____.
8 I get 10% _____ on everything I sell.
9 I believe everyone has the _____ to refuse overtime over a certain number of hours.
10 Most people have a _____ of 20 days' paid _____ every year.

6 ABOUT YOU **Write your answers, or talk to another student.**

1 Have you got a job? If so, which of the perks above do you get? What other perks do you get? Which are the most important to you? _____
2 Are you entitled to all the rights above? _____
3 If you haven't got a job, which of the perks above sound the most important, and why? _____

TEST YOURSELF

LIVEWORKSHEETS