



PEOPLE OVER PROFIT

- Panel Three - More than a job: The future of work in public services

Public service workers work for more than money – they also serve their community. To do so, they require labour rights, decent working conditions and involvement in the management of the services they deliver. But this paradigm is changing all over the world.

Economic and technological developments – but also politics and ideology – are contesting the way public services are provided. Many services previously delivered by government employees are now provided by the private or not-for-profit sectors. In some countries, even core government functions – like justice administration and security – are being outsourced. The results are profound changes in employment conditions, de-unionisation, precarious work and shifts in the culture of provision of these services: away from service to community and towards provision for private profit.

At the same time, technological change provides opportunities for powerful interests to re-shape the economy and our thinking about it. Robots, the sharing economy, the platform or app economy, the network society - all change the relationship between labour and capital and are testing long-established concepts such as “employee” and “employer”, “wages”, “leave”, “exploitation”, “privacy”, and – more importantly – “rights”.

To understand and deal with these new forms of labour and public services, we must not forget that technology is owned, controlled and promoted by social actors with specific interests. And that those who promote private models of public services have political, ideological and economic agendas.

Understanding the current trends is essential to protecting public services and workers’ rights.