

## The Strikes and I



Before I came to live in Reunion I'd heard of the French reputation for **going on strike** whenever possible, or necessary, **whichever** way we see it. But I hadn't realised how true this was, and how often I'd have to be **involved** with, or a victim of these strikes.

It all started back in 2006 when I was first an English assistant. Teachers were going on strike nationwide, I can't remember why exactly, and my boyfriend, who is a music teacher was going to get together with a group of fellow 'Education Nationale' musicians and play outside of the **town hall**. Now, I honestly cannot remember why that strike came about, but I can tell you that it was a very exciting introduction to the world of French strikes. At one point, chanting along to words I couldn't really understand (my French wasn't that great) and to the sound of banging snare drums, I decided that the French were great, and whichever Frenchman had decided to invent strikes must have been a great man. I'd call this the 'Naïve' stage. And that's as far as my love of strikes has gone so far. The next stage of my evolving relationship with strikes was being **baffled** by a generally **dissatisfied** group of people taking their anger out on another generally **clueless** group of people. I'd call this the 'Confusing' stage. Confusing to me firstly because I found it hard to understand what the strikes were really about, and secondly because I always got the impression that at least half of those striking actually didn't understand why they were striking in the first place. For fun, maybe? At that point, I started questioning the greatness of the Frenchman who'd invented the concept of a strike.

The following stage, which I'd call the 'What's the point?' stage, came about when I started to seriously question whether all these strikes were effective. There wasn't really a direct impact on my **everyday life**, not any that was tangible enough to call for a strong enough reaction on my part. And that was the problem. I found myself wondering whether all these strikes were getting any results. Surely they must have been, for many.

The last drop came when, this week, I had to queue for two hours to get some petrol, in the **scorching heat**, to the sound of a local radio station where I could get constant **updates** on the situation. Now, don't get me wrong, I do like this radio station. But 15 minutes at a time and with **air conditioning** or a good fan. I think I'll call this the 'I've had it with strikes that I know nothing about' stage.

Maybe it's the fact that I've aged. Maybe I'm just **selfish**. There certainly are situations which call for action. I'm just not sure striking is the way forward.

## Vocabulary

to go on strike - faire la grève

whichever - quel que soit qui

involved - impliqué

town hall - mairie

baffled - déconcerté

dissatisfied - mécontent

clueless - désemparés

everyday life - la vie quotidienne

scorching heat - chaleur torride

updates - mises à jour

air conditioning - climatisation

selfish - égoïste

