

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

13 March 1999

The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature by e-mailing information to editor@wsws.org

Papua New Guinea Telikom workers on strike

Telikom workers in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, went on strike for seven hours this week to protest against being harassed by security guards hired by the company.

The security personnel claimed to be checking an alleged misuse of company vehicles by workers carrying out after-hours duties. Workers complained that on some occasions police had been called and workers had been detained in police cells even after showing valid passes allowing them to drive the vehicles.

The strikers informed management that they would take further industrial action if the harassment did not cease but the company has not given any such assurance.

Electricity workers continue work bans

More than 1,000 power workers from the NSW government-owned Integral Energy voted this week to reject a company pay offer and to continue a campaign of rolling stoppages and work bans.

The company offered only a 6 percent increase spread over two years and demanded trade-offs including the surrender of bank holiday and concession leave entitlements, and a freeze on a payment normally given to retiring workers. The workers are seeking a 9 percent increase with no trade-offs.

Last week the state's Industrial Relations Commission recommended that the workers cease all industrial action and settle the dispute.

Building workers walk off sites

Building workers, members of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), on at least 14 John Holland sites across Australia held 24- and 48-hour strikes this week when management refused to discuss details of a proposed sale of the company with union officials.

The union asked for information after hearing rumours that mining contractor Henry Walker Ltd was finalising an offer to buy John Holland from its parent company Heytesbury, owned by the Holmes a'Court family. A union spokesman said industrial action would increase next week unless the company agreed to reveal the details of the sale and whether the new owner would honour existing workplace agreements.

John Holland is currently involved in another dispute with the CFMEU at its Sun Metals zinc mine in Townsville, Queensland, where 1,000 workers have been on strike for two weeks over the refusal of the mine's management to negotiate on the conditions in a new site agreement.

BHP cuts more jobs

Last week BHP announced the destruction of 447 jobs from its Australian coal and iron operations. The company's coal mining section will slash 122 jobs from the 262-strong workforce at its West Cliff colliery on the NSW south coast. However, production at the mine will only be reduced from 1.8 million tonnes a year to 1.4 million tonnes.

A management spokesman blamed the loss of some of the company's key domestic customers and the impending closure of its own steelworks in Newcastle as the reason for the West Cliff downsizing. Another 325 jobs will be cut at BHP's West Australia iron ore operations.

Korean bank workers sit-in

Workers at the Hanvit Bank in South Korea staged a sit-in at the bank president's office last week to protest a plan to lay off clerical staff. The protesters clashed with management officials who attempted to eject them from the office.

The bank president refused to meet with the workers and did not attend work for three days following the protest. The Hanvit Bank is the product of a merger between the Commercial Bank of Korea and the Hanil Bank.

Hong Kong Brewery sacks workers

Carlsberg brewery will close its production line in Hong Kong by the end of this month at the cost of 73 jobs. The company plans to relocate the operation at Huizhou in the Guangdong province on the Chinese mainland to cut labour costs.

The Hong Kong brewery employs 300 workers in production, sales and distribution and another 1,200 at its two plants in China. A company spokesman said there were no planned layoffs from the Hong Kong sales and distribution sections.

Indonesian workers shot during wage protest

Eight workers from the PT Kayu Lapis Indonesia factory in Kendal, Central Java were taken to hospital on March 5 after security guards opened fire with rubber bullets on 3,000 workers demonstrating for a wage increase. Four others suffered minor injuries.

The workers were demanding a 40 percent increase in their wages and a food subsidy of 15 US cents per day. The negotiations between company and workers' representatives took about three hours, during which time the demonstration outside swelled rapidly from 1,000 to 3,000 people.

The company refused to meet the demands. When the results were read to the assembled workers, a confrontation with management ensued. Rocks were thrown at the administration buildings and company security guards started shooting into the crowds.

Substantial layoffs at Indonesian defence factory

Nearly one third of the 4,600-strong workforce at a government-owned defence factory in Bandung, West Java was sacked last week as part of a restructuring program. The company produces military and non-military equipment, including public transport vehicles, electrical and agricultural machinery.

Of the 1,320 sacked, 800 are members of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI), who have been sent back to their army bases. Most of the sacked workers have worked for the company for at least 15 years and will be paid a minimal redundancy package.



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