

Workers Struggles: Europe and Africa

23 December 1999

Euro Disney workers threaten strike over millennium payments

Workers at the Euro Disney theme park near Paris are set to strike on December 23 in a dispute over millennium bonus payment arrangements. Five of seven unions at the company issued the strike call after talks with management ended without agreement earlier this week. The unions represent 10,600 workers at Euro Disney and a strike would hit the park's millennium celebrations, expected to attract 45,000 visitors. During 1999 Euro Disney saw its profit level fall by almost 50 percent and the theme park has accumulated large debts.

Management at Euro Disney offered 700 francs (\$107.60) to each employee working during the millennium festivities, but the union is calling for 2,000 to 4,000 francs and three additional days off. The five-union coalition also stated that next year's pay deal should be concluded before December 28, rather than the middle of January, "in order to avoid a possible salary freeze as happened in the first six months of 1999".

French airline workers end strike

Aviation refuelling crews in France ended their two-day strike this week after reaching an agreement with their employers. The crews had struck in protest at government plans to deregulate the industry. Eleven of the country's main airports were affected by the action and the national airline Air France was forced to cancel half its flights. The majority of the strikers returned to work on December 17, but crews in Marseilles remained on strike until this week.

Train drivers in Ireland strike to defend working conditions

Irish train drivers struck on December 15, closing three of eight inter-city services and halting numerous suburban routes. The strike was held in opposition to a management proposal to amalgamate two rail depots at Dublin's main terminus. Rail routes between Dublin

and Belfast, Galway, Sligo and Westport in the southwest of the country, and Rosslare in the south, were all hit by the strike, and 30,000 passengers were unable to make planned journeys, according to the state railway company Iarnrod Eireann.

The railway branch of the SIPTU trade union said the longer working hours and night shifts required under the planned amalgamation would put drivers at the less busy depots at a disadvantage. It said a separate contract for each depot was needed.

Hungarian rail workers take industrial action in pay dispute

Hungarian railway workers struck for nine hours on December 20. The strike was the latest in a series of walkouts against the state rail company MAV. The strike went ahead following a breakdown in negotiations between the rail union and MAV management the previous day. MAV is offering a wage increase of 8.5 percent, while the union is calling for a higher increase.

Hungarian miners strike against job losses in industry

On December 15 some 10,000 Hungarian coal miners took strike action to oppose government plans to restructure the mining industry. The proposals will lead to the loss of 3,000 jobs, according to the Tatabanya Miners' Democratic Union. Other unions estimate that the total job losses could be as high as 26,000 nationwide.

Burundian university workers continue strike

Burundian university workers have rejected a government appeal to end their two-week indefinite strike for promotion rights. The government had called on the workers to "show a sense of duty" to students, whilst urging university management to take action against any employee "absent without leave". In response, the university workers' union issued a statement reiterating its four-year campaign for promotion rights and stating its intention to continue

the action.

Maswiri land rights activists win legal case against eviction

More than 300 sacked Northern Province farm workers won a court order at the weekend preventing their employer from evicting them. The 363 workers and their families were supposed to vacate Andries Fourie's farm, Maswiri Boerdery, in the far Northern Province by Saturday. The workers were fired in February for striking against low wages and poor working conditions. In a controversial deal following a Labour Court order, Fourie's lawyers and the workers' union, Tusaa, agreed that just 10 workers would be re-employed and the remainder would receive compensation and be required to vacate the farm.

The workers had insisted that Tusaa had no mandate to discuss the land issue and that the out-of-court settlement had betrayed their land rights. On Wednesday the Nkuzi Development Association intervened and applied for help from the Land Claims Court, which issued an order to stop the eviction.



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