

Workers Struggles: Europe and Africa

4 May 2000

German public sector workers stage warning strikes

Public sector workers staged "warning strikes" on May 4 and 5 in pursuit of a 5 percent pay increase. Called by the ÖTV and DAG trade unions, the dispute involves some 3.1 million public sector workers, including teachers, police officers, garbage collectors and bus drivers.

The Social Democratic Party/Greens coalition government has rejected the 5 percent demand as too costly, offering instead an increase of just 1.2 percent in 2000 and 0.7 percent in 2001. The unions and government representatives are to meet on May 5.

Norwegian workers to strike this week

Eighty-two thousand private sector workers struck on May 3 in the largest labour conflict in Norway in 15 years, after members of the Confederation of Trade Unions voted by 64.3 percent to reject a wage settlement drawn up by the union and the bosses' confederation. Workers threw out the joint deal, which would have provided for a pay increase of between 3.5 and 4 percent and a fifth week of vacation starting in 2002. The indefinite strike action came at the same time as the central bank increased interest rates by 0.25 percent, effectively annulling the pay increase by raising mortgage costs.

The strike involved hotel workers in 10 cities as well as ferry and product delivery service workers. Construction workers also struck and Norway's two main tabloid newspapers ceased publication for the day. The unions have not called out workers in the main industries such as the offshore oil and gas industry, the metal industry or in mass transportation. It has been estimated that the strike will cost industry 1 billion Norwegian krone a week.

Non-teaching staff in Northern Ireland to ballot for strike action

Classroom assistants, technicians and administrative workers at more than 200 Ulster schools are to be

balloted for strike action in a dispute over out-of-term pay. The NIPSA union that represents the non-teaching staff in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area has called the ballot. The workers are demanding payment of a retainer—half of their regular term-time pay—while schools are closed in between terms. A strike by the workers could result in the schools being closed for the duration.

Striking Zambian doctors arrested after permit denied for demo

Eighty-three Lusaka-based junior resident doctors, opposition UPND members and other Lusaka residents were arrested last Thursday for conducting an "illegal" demonstration. The protest was the latest event in the junior doctors' five-month stand-off with the government over declining health



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