

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

10 August 2000

Irish rail strike continues

The protracted unofficial strike by Irish rail drivers is set to continue this week, following a meeting of the executive of the Irish Locomotive Drivers' Association (ILDA).

The ILDA is not recognised by Irish Rail, with whom the 100 workers on strike are in dispute over pay and conditions.

The workers have been taking unofficial action every week for the past two months. The latest action took place on August 5/6, when ILDA members blocked several lines and disrupted services on a number of routes. Irish Rail said they had lost IR£500,000 throughout the public holiday weekend. As yet the company has not made any direct attempts to resolve the dispute, as it will not negotiate with the ILDA.

South Wales postal workers strike to defend sacked colleagues

Postal workers in South Wales took strike action last week in defence of workers sacked because they took sickness leave. On August 4, 200 workers struck for 24 hours at the Royal Mail sorting offices at Bridgend and Aberdare. Postal workers have stated that they will take further action if the sacked workers are not reinstated.

Auto unions in UK suspend strike against Peugeot pending negotiations

Unions representing Peugeot autoworkers in Coventry, England, have suspended their strike following a meeting between unions and management on August 2. The unions, including the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union and the Transport and General Workers Union, agreed to suspend industrial action after Peugeot said that it would not impose new working hours at the moment. The company said that it would introduce the new contracts in three weeks and would have talks with the unions involved during that period to try to reach a settlement.

Union leaders originally recommended acceptance of a contract cutting weekly working hours from 39 to

36.75. Workers rejected this proposal, as it meant more Friday evening shifts. Two one day strikes were held in the week leading up to the meeting and workers threatened all out action on their return from the summer shut-down on August 21.

Angolan teachers strike

Teachers in four of Angola's 18 provinces have begun a strike to protest against the lack of teacher-training, low salaries and in some cases, unpaid wages. The strike paralysed schools in the provinces of Huila, Bié, Malanje and Kwanza Sul.

Monthly wages for teachers are as low as \$7. The teachers say that months of fruitless discussions with the government have left them no alternative but to strike. In March, Education Minister Antonio Burity da Silva pledged to increase salaries to a minimum of \$77 a month by the end of April. However, many teachers have reported little change. Often salaries do not come through for several months on end.

Angola has one of the worst education systems in the world. According to the United Nations, half of all adults are illiterate. Last year UNICEF, the United Nations children's organisation, estimated that nearly half of all Angolan children were not in school. In the same year, the Ministry of Education reported that over 70 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 have no schooling. Parents say they cannot afford to pay relatively high school fees. Because of the backlog in salaries, teachers often request unofficial payments or bribes from pupils.

Another problem is the lack of education for the teachers themselves. According to official rules, Angolan teachers must have achieved the eighth grade in school to qualify for work, but in practice few attain this level. This year, education in Angola received just 7 percent of the total budget. Of that figure, 5 percent goes on salaries, leaving just 2 percent for other investments.

Nigerian dockworkers stage protest

Dockworkers at the two ports in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos staged a protest Monday against new government measures restricting access to the docks. The government had directed that dockworkers had to register with stevedore companies before they would be allowed into the port complex.



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