

Workers Struggles: Europe and Africa

24 August 2000

Ukrainian miners begin protests over compensation, wage arrears

On August 16, over 100 former miners began a picket of the Ministry of the Coal Industry in eastern Ukraine. The ex-miners, who worked at the Gagarin mine in Donetsk, are calling for compensation payments for their chronic ill-health as a result of injuries and illnesses sustained at the time of their employment.

The are demanding pension payments due to them from the period 1995 to 1997. A further 75 former miners joined the protest over the next few days.

Another group of 41 miners from Donetsk and 191 miners from the Partyzanska mine were also marching to the Ukrainian capital Kiev to demand payment of wage arrears.

The Ukrainian government has set aside Hr 1.5 billion from its budget to pay miners their backdated claims. The money allotted was due to be raised in tax collections from companies and factories, but has not been collected.

Tram workers in Bulgaria walk off the job

Tram workers in Sofia began strike action on August 21 after the disappearance of a female employee during the previous night shift. The striking drivers are calling on the tram company and the mayor of Sofia to guarantee their security at work.

The 28-year-old woman disappeared and the only trace of her was a pool of blood found in the driver's cabin of her abandoned tram. Earlier this year a 23-year-old tram driver was shot dead after accidentally driving in front of a luxury car. The killer was never found or the car traced.

Council workers in Scotland vote to strike

Council workers in Scotland voted last week to strike in a dispute over pay. The workers are members of the public services union Unison and were balloted in each of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities.

The vote was 16,128 votes to 12,672 in favour of strike action and to reject a 2.5 percent pay rise offer.

Joe Di Paola, Unison's Scottish organiser for local government, said, "Central Government has not funded staff pay increases for seven years and local government staff are fed up carrying the burden of cuts that local services have suffered." He added that the union hoped to meet with council managers to avoid industrial action.

Nambibian Fishermen take strike action

More than 300 workers who make up the crews on 14 long-line fishing vessels belonging to nine different companies went on strike demanding a 19 percent pay rise. The men belong to the Namibia Federation of Trade Unions (Nafta), whose spokesman said that the dispute could not be resolved earlier this month by a conciliation board. They are also demanding permanent contracts for workers, including benefits such as a pension fund and medical aid.

A spokesman for a number of the companies said that he was surprised by the press release by the union as they had agreed not to go to the media unless it was jointly with the management. The union had turned down a 10 percent offer and its demand for 19 percent was said to be "non-negotiable".

The long-line industry, catching mainly hake, tuna and swordfish, has grown rapidly over the past few years, selling most of its catch to Spain. It is now entering a critical phase because of competition with South Africa, which is entering the market again after its government allocated quotas to long-line fishermen.

Strike of Morocco oil workers

Workers at Morocco's state-owned oil refining company facilities at Mohammedia (near Casablanca) and Sidi Kacem (north of Rabat) are continuing strike action over "management's refusal to satisfy the legitimate demands of employees". No further details of the issues involved were made available. This is the third industrial action taken recently by the workers who belong to the Democratic Confederation of Workers, a government controlled organisation.



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