

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

23 November 2000

Council workers in Scotland strike over pay

On November 16, council workers in Scotland held a one-day strike in an ongoing dispute over pay. Around 70,000 staff at schools, libraries and refuse collection services participated.

The strike was called by the public services union Unison, following its rejection of the latest offer from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosla).

In Glasgow, the City Council reported that all council offices, including the City Chambers, most libraries and several sports and leisure facilities were forced to close. Ten schools in the city were also closed and buses to take children to the city's special schools were cancelled.

Cosla's latest offer to council staff was a 6.1 percent pay increase over two years. Unison rejected the offer on the grounds that it was a two-year deal. The GMB and TGWU, the two other main local government unions have voted to accept the deal after it was raised from an initial 2.5 percent over one year.

Scottish postal workers balloted for strike action

Postal workers in Scotland are currently being balloted for strike action to protest harassment and bullying at work. The ballot has been organised by the Communication Workers' Union. The union has sent out ballot papers to 3,000 postal workers in Edinburgh, Fife and the Lothians. Strike action would take place in December, the busiest month of the year, if the ballot is successful.

Eurotunnel drivers strike over union recognition

Eurotunnel shuttle train drivers struck for 24 hours on November 20 in a dispute over trade union recognition. The strike disrupted some Eurotunnel services, but Eurostar train drivers are not involved in the dispute.

The train drivers union Aslef called the strike. The union has opposed the single union deal struck by Eurotunnel with the Transport and General Workers' Union. The deal includes all staff, including drivers.

Aslef issued a statement saying that it had been

seeking support for its members from Eurotunnel's French-based drivers. The union has also announced that four further one-day strikes on Mondays are planned over the next month.

Nigerian food workers begin strike over minimum wage

Activities in some Nigerian food and beverage companies were paralysed last week due to strike action by the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association (FOBTOB) over the implementation of a new minimum wage in the industry. FOBTOB officials said the strike was solid in Eastern zone, Northern zone, Lagos and Agurara, with no production in any of the Coca-Cola plants in Ikeja, Apapa and Mushin. Junior staff in the National Union of Food Beverage and Tobacco Employees (NUFBTE) have also signalled their intention to strike if employers fail to reach agreement with FOBTOB.

Strike cripples Nigerian gas project

A strike by workers on the second phase of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) project in Bonny Island, Rivers State, brought work to a halt last week. Sources at the plant said that due to the strike action, the gates to the zone were firmly locked, resulting in visitors to the NLNG being turned back.

The affected workers are employed by Daewoo and went on strike over the company's refusal to give an improved welfare package. The issue of welfare has remained contentious since the construction companies rejected workers' demands for an improved salary package.

Strikes against South African privatisations

Public services came to a halt last Thursday in the Northern Cape, as around 2,000 members of the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) went on a one-day strike to protest against privatisation yesterday.

A two-day strike by Johannesburg municipal workers also took place on Wednesday and Thursday last week. Thousands of workers affiliated to Samwu took to the

streets of Johannesburg to protest the implementation of the city's restructuring plan—Igoli 2002. A memorandum detailing the workers' grievances was handed over to council authorities at the Metropolitan Centre in Braamfontein. Around 20,000 stayed away from work. Contracting out of services has meant a loss of several benefits, including job guarantees.

There were also work stoppages in the East Rand metropolitan council. Workers held one-hour stoppages in the Pretoria, Centurion, the Akasia-Soshanguve, Bronkhorstpruit and Cullinan local councils.

In Cape Town, Samwu called off a planned strike yesterday, after it was unsuccessful in opposing an interdict brought by the city commission. Union spokesman Majidie Abrahams said Samwu lost the interdict because it did not adhere to the 30-day notice of an intention to strike, as stipulated by the Labour Relations Act. The union said it would serve the notice next week.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has distanced itself from the strikes in order to preserve its alliance with the ANC government. Although publicly opposing the ANC's privatisation programme, an official Cosatu statement warned municipal workers that “it was tactically incorrect” to embark on industrial action so close to the upcoming municipal elections—thus putting its partner the ANC in a vulnerable position.



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