

Workers Struggles: Europe and Africa

19 April 2001

Guinness workers in Ireland strike to oppose plant closure

Workers at the Guinness brewery in Ireland began strike action on April 12 to protest the closure of a packaging plant at Dundalk, Co Louth with the loss of 150 jobs. The strike was the first time in more than 25 years that production has been halted at Guinness in Ireland.

Picket lines were mounted at the Dundalk operation, as well as at Guinness premises in Dublin, Waterford and Kilkenny. The strike was called by five of the six trade unions at Guinness, who represent the 1,200 workers involved in the industrial action.

The strike began following the breakdown of talks and an intervention from Ireland's Labour Relations Commission who attempted to have the action stopped.

The unions suspended the strike within hours, following a statement from the company that they would defer the closure of the Dundalk plant, pending further talks in Dublin next week.

Guinness had estimated that a prolonged strike would cost them IR£15 million a week, including IR£5 million in exports. Within hours of the strike beginning, there was a fall in the price of shares of the Diageo group, the owners of Guinness.

Auto workers at Peugeot in England vote for strike action

Autoworkers at the Peugeot-Citroen plant in the England have voted to strike in a dispute over pay.

The strike was called by the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), which represents 2,000 of Peugeot's 3,000 workers at the plant. A total of 865 workers voted in favour of action, with 831 voting against, a majority of just 34. Members of the AEEU union voted against strike action in their ballot.

Peugeot have made the workers a two-year pay offer, increasing pay by 4.3 percent this year, an inflation-linked rise in the second year, with an extra 0.7 percent increase on top. The company, Europe's second biggest

carmaker by market share, has said this its final offer. The TGWU said that it hoped that it would not have to hold a strike. A union spokesman said, "We've got a mandate to strike, but we hope it won't come to that." The union is set to meet with the AEEU this week to discuss the next phase of their talks with Peugeot.

Radio Uganda staff strike over non-payment of wages

Journalists and workers at Radio Uganda's current affairs department went on strike on April 10, accusing management of failing to pay them salaries since October last year. The workers were said to have stopped working after realising that they were not going to be paid. They said, "We have resolved to go ahead with the strike until we are paid our salaries from October last year."

Workers in the news department had been paid salary arrears of October to February, and those in the other departments had been paid their arrears from October to March. The strikers accuse the administration of intimidation. "They are calling reporters and threatening them with being sacked if they don't continue with their work. They are intimidating us and have forced interns to work in our places, threatening them with bad recommendations," they said.

The workers accuse the newsroom head, Namungalu Mageneso, of poor administration, saying he was the cause of their grievances. They said their efforts to seek redress from other officials like the Permanent Secretary and the Commissioner had been fruitless.



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