Workers Struggles: Europe and Africa

26 April 2001

French transport workers continue dispute over retirement age

On April 23, transport workers in France continued their strikes to demand a cut in the retirement age to 55 instead of 60. The latest one-day action brought bus and underground services to a virtual halt in nearly 50 cities, with the exception of the capital Paris.

In Marseilles, France's second city, all public transport was paralysed and in Lyon, almost all buses, trams and subway services were halted. A separate strike by bus and metro workers in Paris is expected to go ahead on April 25.

French airline workers strike to protest cutbacks in services

On April 18, workers employed by the French airlines AOM/Air Liberté took strike action against the company's proposal to cut back flights by 25 percent in order to limit financial losses. The strike affected a number of domestic and some regional flights.

The stoppage was called by a number of trade unions at the airlines that are jointly owned by SAirGroup and French holding company Marine Wendel. Earlier this month, SAirGroup cut off all financial support to Air Littoral, a sister airline to AOM/Air Liberté and said it will make a decision on the future of the other two carriers on April 25.

Air Liberté said that flights leaving from or departing for Nice, Marseille, Toulouse, Bordeaux and Montpellier had been cancelled starting at 0730 GMT, as a result of the strike.

Rail guards in England to strike

Rail guards employed by South West Trains in England are to stage two 24-hour strikes next month over a number of issues, including the lurid colour of their uniforms. The strikes will be held on May 3 and 11, after members of the Rail Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) voted for industrial action.

The vote for strike action is the culmination of 18 months of negotiations between the RMT and South West Trains. Recently South West Trains introduced a new uniform that included bright red waistcoats and guards having to wear name badges. Staff have complained that this has led to them being targets for abuse.

The strike is expected to result in severe disruption to train services into London's busy Waterloo station from the south coast of England and the West Country.

London Underground workers to continue strike against privatisation

London Underground staff are to continue their campaign against government plans to privatise the service by holding a further strike during the evening of May 2. The Rail Maritime and Transport Union announced the strike last week.

The stoppage will be the third since early February and could last for up to 36 hours. Workers are concerned that safety will be compromised under the government's plans to run the Tube through a public-private partnership (PPP). The Corporation of London estimates that the proposed strike will cost the city around £100 million ($143.5m).

In another dispute, thousands of London Underground staff, members of the Rail Maritime and Transport union and the driver's union Aslef, are being balloted for strike action over the lack of washing facilities at remote stations. The RMT stated that London Underground has reneged on an agreement to supply washing facilities, lockers and parking for staff on duty at outlying Tube stations. The ballot result is expected on May 17.

Six striking local government workers arrested in Zambia

A strike by local government workers from the occupational health department in Kitwe, northern Zambia, was declared illegal on Monday. Six members of the Zambia United and Local Authorities Workers Union (ZULAWU) were arrested, when they and other workers tried to block management from entering their

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offices. Police had previously attacked the workers with tear gas.

The workers are demanding the dissolution of the board of management, and improved conditions of service.

In nearby Ndola, a strike by health workers has entered its second week. The workers, who include nurses and paramedics, are protesting against the government decision to transfer them from the Ministry of Health to the same board as the local authority workers, without their consent.

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