

Workers Struggles: Europe, the Middle East and Africa

19 September 2002

London Underground workers to take further industrial action

On September 17 the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union announced that its members employed on the London Underground tube system would hold a further two 24-hour strikes on September 24 and October 1 in an ongoing dispute over pay.

The strike will coincide with workers from the drivers' union Aslef taking industrial action in the same dispute. It will involve thousands of workers employed at stations and signalling staff and will result in the total shutdown of the underground transport network.

The RMT members voted earlier this month to take strike action in protest at the imposition of a 3 percent pay deal. The Aslef drivers voted for strike action by a majority of more than 60 percent.

Local authority workers in London to strike

Public service council workers in London are to hold a 24-hour strike on October 1 in a longstanding dispute over living allowances. On September 12 negotiations between the public sector trade union Unison and local authority management ended without agreement.

Unison and other public sector unions are calling for a new living allowance of £4,000 a year to replace the current allowances ranging from £1,400 to £2,600. A Unison negotiator said that the 24-hour stoppage would be followed by further selective strikes aimed at preventing the collection of council revenues.

Norwegian oil workers strike ends

A strike by a section of Norwegian oil workers ended September 16 following a new contract for the workers. The deal was concluded by the Norwegian Oil Workers Union and the state-controlled oil company, Statoil ASA.

The strike began on August 29 over the Norwegian Oil Workers Union's right to represent its members in

talks with all oil industry employers. The strike was later joined by 220 members of the Confederation of Employees in the Private Sector at two key refineries, a plastics plant and Statoil's administration. The dispute resulted in the closure of the company's Mongstad refinery.

Hours prior to the agreement the strike had expanded to include office workers at Statoil ASA. Norway is the world's third-largest oil exporter, after Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Lebanese casino workers to strike

Casino staff are set to strike in a longstanding dispute over working conditions and a bonus scheme. Employees of the Casino du Liban in Lebanon, members of the Union of Gambling Games Workers, are set to strike alongside members of the Union of Workers and Employees. The dispute dates back to March when staff called for an improvement in working conditions, such as decent ventilation. The employees also called for the allocation of commission from the casino's slot machines. Legally the union members only have the right to strike for 15 days following the end of mediation.

Zambian teachers strike for pay rise

Zambian teachers in the areas of Kabwe and Kapiri Mposhi have gone on an indefinite strike in support of their demand for a pay rise. An official of the Zambia National Union of Teachers (ZNUT), Godfrey Nguluta, said the ZNUT affiliate teachers had decided to go on strike until they receive a response from the ministry or the union.

Acting education minister Dr. Brian Chituwo said the teachers' move was uncalled for. He accused ZNUT officials of using the striking teachers as a "political launch pad" and called on teachers not to follow them.

Earlier, Deputy Education Minister Rosemary Chipampe appealed to teachers to call off the strike "to

enable government to find solutions to their problems”.

Clothing workers to hold solidarity strike

A strike of around 30,000 members of the Southern African Clothing and Textiles Workers’ Union (Sactwu) in the Western Cape was due to take place September 18. The action is in solidarity with workers at Team Puma Textiles, who have been on strike for 10 weeks in support of their demand for an 8.25 percent wage increase, higher annual bonuses, provident fund contributions and shift allowances.

Last week the union suspended the solidarity action until September 18 while negotiation took place on new proposals put forward by Team Puma. The union refused to give details on what the offer contained.

Wayne der Rheede, Sactwu’s national organising secretary, said that little progress was being made in the meetings between the company and the union at the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).



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