

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

25 February 2005

The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature by e-mailing information to: editor@wsws.org

Europe

College lecturers strike 42 colleges in England in pay dispute

College lecturers at 42 further education colleges in England held a 24-hour strike on February 24 in a dispute over pay. The industrial action was called following the Association of Colleges' refusal to implement a nationally agreed pay deal worth an average of 8 percent.

The action was called by the lecturers' trade union, Natfhe, which said negotiations at 21 other colleges had been successful. Stoppages by lecturers at five other colleges are due to begin on March 1 and the union announced that further action might follow.

The Association of Colleges chief executive John Brennan blamed the problem on lack of government funding. "Colleges receive at least 10 percent less per student from the government than schools for providing the same courses," he said. "Fair funding would allow colleges to pay their staff more and still balance their books."

Italian Alitalia flight attendants in contract dispute

Alitalia flight attendants held a 24-hour strike on February 21 in a dispute over the renewal of their contracts. The strike forced the cancellation of 90 flights according to the Italian airline, including 28 domestic flights, 50 European flights and 12 intercontinental flights.

The stoppage was organised by one of the trade union confederations representing Alitalia employees. The workers will continue a "sandwich strike" until February 26 during which they will refuse to serve in-flight snacks and beverages.

Following the strike Alitalia reported that negotiations with trade unions were "going forward." Earlier this month staff organised in the Sult labour union struck Alitalia, causing the cancellation of 140 flights.

Alitalia, 62 percent owned by the Italian treasury ministry, is in the midst of restructuring plans under which it plans to shed 3,700 jobs and separate its ground service operations from its flight business. Last week the airline announced that its operating loss before interest and taxes was 88.7 million euros (\$US115.02 million) in the last three months of 2004.

Ground staff strike at Paris airport

Ground staff at Orly airport, Paris, began strike action on February 18 to protest against the suspension of a ground agent who had been held responsible for the accidental death of a stewardess. The flight attendant fell from the top of a mobile stairway while passengers were disembarking from a plane on February 1.

Last week Air France management suspended a tarmac worker at the airport pending a police investigation. The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) trade union said Air France management had "chosen the guilty person while the law had still not completed its enquiries."

Consequently, 80 percent of ground staff voted to strike beginning February 18. The action, which grounded up to 65 percent of flights, lasted until February 22 and ended without the demands of the workers to reinstate the tarmac worker being fulfilled.

Minister of Transport Gilles de Robien condemned the strike and said that it was illegal. The company also used strikebreakers in an attempt to weaken the industrial action.

Maltese postal staff work strike in health and safety dispute

On February 21, several Maltapost workers took

strike action following a dispute between the Union Haddiema Maghqudin (UHM) and the company's management. The industrial action was called following complaints that the staff, who organise postal deliveries, were working with tools deemed a threat to health and safety regulations by the UHM.

Middle East

Baghdad hotel workers stage strike

Some 400 hundred workers took strike action at one of Baghdad's main hotels on February 20. The Public Service Workers Union committee, which is affiliated to the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, representing staff at the Palestine Hotel called for strike action after negotiations with the hotel management for a wage increase broke down.

Employees said that they would continue their strike until their demands are fully met. Workers at the nearby Sheraton Baghdad Hotel recently staged a successful strike in which they won a slight wage increase and better working conditions.

Africa

Month-long strike of health workers in the DRC

Doctors, nurses and other medical personnel employed in government hospitals in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have been on strike for a month. They are demanding better pay and the same status as other public servants.

Doctors took strike action over the same issue in December 2004. They returned to work later that month when they received a promise of better pay and a one-off premium of \$170 to \$361. However, they insist that the government's promises have been broken.

After five years of civil war and serious neglect by central government, public health facilities in the DRC are in a state of near collapse.

Striking South African teachers forced back to work

Teachers, who went on strike last week in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa, have been forced back to work. The strike began when thousands of teachers in Port Elizabeth walked out of their classes and marched to the city centre demanding the withdrawal of Circular 48, which outlines the department's staffing plans for the coming financial year. The teachers believe that the plans will result in substantial redundancies.

The strike was suspended by the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) after it received a

letter from the state attorney describing the strike as illegal and threatening legal action if the union failed to comply.

The union responded by calling on members to return to work immediately "until proper procedures have been followed." Sadtu provincial secretary Mxolisi Dimaza said union members would continue teaching, but would remain "non-cooperative" with the department with regard to programmes and workshops.

Nigerian doctors resume indefinite strike action

Doctors at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) resumed indefinite strike action on February 15 over the non-payment of salary arrears and other entitlements. They were previously on strike from mid-December until the end of January, when the action was called off after promises were made to address their grievances.

At an emergency general meeting the doctors, who are members of the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), unanimously agreed to renew their industrial action, because of hospital management's failure to make good its promises.

According to *Daily Champion*, LUTH's chief medical officer Professor Tolu Odukoya attempted to prevent the strike by telling the doctors that the cheque for payment of their arrears was forwarded to the bank on February 17 and would be cleared within days.

Three-day warning strike by Nigerian university lecturers

Members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria began a three-day warning strike on February 23.

The action is in protest against the federal government's failure to honour the 2001 ASUU/FGN Agreement, the sacking of 44 lecturers from the University of Ilorin in the Kwara region, and the "unjust discriminatory" seizure of ASUU members' salaries since 2003-2004.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact