

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

15 July 2005

Europe

Northampton, England, post office staff strike

On July 7, staff at a Royal Mail sorting office in Northampton walked out on unofficial strike. Forty-nine workers are reported to have participated in the stoppage at the Crow Lane office.

The strike began following complaints by workers over the implementation of new working practices and that management had reduced the amount of overtime available.

The strike action escalated when the workers were joined by a further 500 sorting and delivery staff from the Crow Lane, St. James and Wellingborough sites of Royal Mail. During the industrial action, mail deliveries to a number of areas in Northampton were disrupted.

The strike ended on July 12, following talks between trade union representatives and Royal Mail managers.

Bus drivers in two English counties strike in pay dispute

Bus drivers employed by the First bus company in Devon and Cornwall, in the southwest of England, took strike action on July 8 in a dispute over pay. The strike resulted in the disruption of hundreds of bus services throughout both counties. The drivers are also refusing to work any voluntary overtime.

The strike arose when drivers cited concerns over a pay discrepancy between regular bus drivers and those who drive smaller vehicles.

Last week, talks between First and the Rail, Maritime and Transport trade union broke down. Both parties are due to hold further talks with the conciliation body ACAS this week.

A further strike is scheduled for July 21, unless the dispute is settled.

Britain: cleaners at Houses of Parliament vote to strike

On July 13, staff at the Houses of Parliament in London voted to strike in a dispute over pay and conditions. The 24-hour action is due to be held on July 20 and will involve up to 170 members of the Transport and General

Workers' Union.

The cleaners are demanding a pay increase of £1.70 an hour. At present, they are paid £5 an hour, just 15 pence above the minimum wage. The workers are also calling for sick-pay benefits, better holidays and a company pension.

The industrial action is scheduled to be held a day before the House of Commons and the House of Lords break for the summer recess.

Africa

Strike in South African glass industry continues

South African glass workers went out on strike on July 8, in response to a company offer of a 5 percent pay increase. Black and white workers are reported to be participating in the strike together for the first time in the industry. The strike continued after the weekend, with no sign of any settlement being reached. A report by Sapa (South African Press Agency) listed the strikers' demands as an 8 percent pay increase, six months' paid maternity leave, overtime in line with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, a 40-hour working week with no loss of pay, and five days' leave for compassionate reasons. The companies affected by the strike include Consol Glass, Nampak Glass, PFG Glass, PG Glass and Owens Corning.

Striking Liberian civil servants refuse to return to work

Liberian civil servants who went out on strike on July 5 are refusing to return to work despite a government offer to pay four months of their salary arrears. They are demanding the government pay at least 8 of the 17 months' salary arrears they are owed. In the second week of the strike, government offices in Monrovia were empty and the government admitted that state revenues were down as a result.

Zambian copper miners launch strike to demand better pay

Workers at the Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) in Kitwe, the commercial centre of the Zambian copper belt, went out on strike July 12. The stoppage started at the Nkana division and has since spread to the Nchanga and

Konkola divisions. The miners have rejected a 15 percent increase offered by management, telling journalists they would not resume work until they were awarded a 100 percent salary increment. According to a report in the Ndola-based *Times of Zambia*, the miners had chased away their union branch officials, accusing them of selling out in talks with management. The miners have also threatened to resign from both the Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ) and the National Union of Miners and Allied Workers (NUMAW), which they said no longer represented them effectively, after the unions had urged a return to work.

South Africa: municipal workers stage one-day strike

Members of the South African Municipal Workers Union and the Independent Municipal and Allied Workers Union staged a one-day strike on July 12. They are demanding a 9 percent pay increase and a minimum wage of R3000 (US\$450) and are opposing the privatisation of public services. All major South African cities were affected. In Johannesburg, buses were halted, no rubbish collections took place and customers were unable to pay their utility bills at council offices.

Nigerian steel workers launch industrial action

Workers at the Ajaokuta Steel Company in Nigeria, Africa's largest steelmaker, have launched industrial action in a dispute over terminal benefits. Addressing more than 3,000 workers, Momoh Musa, Ajaokuta branch chairman of the Iron and Steel Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ISSSAN), said Senator Liyel Imoke, the minister of power and steel, had reneged on his earlier agreement to pay the N9.2 billion (US\$66 million) package as promised them last month. Musa insisted the strike would continue until all entitlements related to the terminal benefits are paid. Steel workers at the meeting denounced the national bodies of ISSSAN and the Steel and Engineering Workers Union of Nigeria, which they said were unable to protect the workers' interests.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact