

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

23 December 2005

Europe

Workers at Heathrow airport in second strike

Approximately 1,000 construction workers of a 6,000-strong workforce, working on the building of a new terminal at Heathrow airport, London, went on strike December 19.

Dawn picket lines were set up Monday following a weekend walkout over pay. The workers are demanding an extra £1 an hour on their bonus schemes, but contractors Laing O'Rourke are offering just 22p.

The present strike is the second such recent action, and if the dispute is not resolved, there have been further threats of industrial action scheduled for January 20 and 23. The last review of bonus pay rates took place three years ago.

Terminal 5 (T5) is being built on the western side of Heathrow—Europe's busiest airport—at a cost of £4 billion and is due to be completed in 2008.

UK teachers strike over work and pay changes

Changes to staffing structures throughout schools in England and Wales have sparked calls for industrial action.

Some school staff will have their pay cut under the switch to new "teaching and learning responsibility payments," due to come into place in England by December 31 and in Wales by March 2006.

The new payment structure will reward extra responsibility for teaching and learning, rather than management and administration. The payments—known as TLRs—are payable at two levels ranging from £2,250 to £5,500 and from £6,500 to £11,000. The current five management allowances—which are being scrapped—range from £1,638 to £10,572.

The move to TLRs obliges schools to review their entire staffing structures, and there is no guarantee for teachers that existing positions of responsibility will be transferred to an equivalent post. If a new post is created, normal recruitment procedures must be followed. In some cases, teachers will have to compete

for the post, and inevitably some will lose money under the new structure.

On December 15, staff went on strike over the new changes at Plumstead Manor Secondary School, Greenwich, Shaftesbury Primary School, Newham and Northcliffe Secondary School, Doncaster. In addition, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) conducted eight formal ballots for strike action, and a further 16 are under way.

Cypriot teachers strike

Teaching staff at the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) went on a one-day strike December 20, in protest at the failure of attempts to reach a settlement on the outstanding issues between the government and the teaching union over collective bargaining and job assurances.

The strike, which started at 8 a.m., was effective in all workplaces across the university campus, including the main faculties, high schools, Eastern Mediterranean College and Primary School.

The union's executive committee organised a mass meeting of members immediately after the start of the one-day strike, hinting at further actions if the dispute remains unresolved.

Africa

Police in Central African Republic prevent strikers from meeting

Striking civil servants in the Central African Republic were prevented from holding a planned rally in the capital, Bangui, by the police. On December 17, the police sealed off the headquarters of the Central African Workers' Union (USTC) in order to prevent its members from gathering there.

Workers have not been paid their salaries for up to 45 months, as successive administrations have left them without pay. Most of the workers have now been on strike for nearly three months.

The government had promised in mid-November that it would pay two months' worth of unpaid salaries by

the end of that month, but paid only half that amount. The USTC has instructed its members not to go back until the government pays another month of the arrears. In a letter published on December 19, the union said of the police action, “The regime has shown that it is willing to repress peaceful demonstrations and take away people’s individual and collective rights.”

Namibian dairy workers’ union ends dispute

Workers at Namibia Dairies Limited have been told by the Namibia Food and Allied Workers Union to return to work after it reached an “amicable settlement” with management. This was after NAFAU had originally opposed the workers’ one-day strike on December 15, calling instead for a lunchtime demonstration.

The settlement involves a payment to workers of N\$1320 (US\$208) in place of their annual bonuses, and an increase in monthly salaries and wages of N\$160 (US\$25) across the board. The union had earlier demanded a bonus equal to 86 percent of monthly salaries and wages. The workers themselves had called for a 100 percent bonus, to make up for receiving only 50 percent last year.

Namibia Dairies is part of the Ohlthaver & List Group of Companies, which is based in the Namibian capital, Windhoek.

Strike closes universities in Nigeria

Members of the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU) in Nigeria walked out in a three-day warning strike this week, closing tertiary institutions—universities, polytechnics and colleges of education—throughout the country.

The staff are protesting non-payment of a “monetisation” benefit—cash payments for benefits agreed by the federal government. The union has given the government two weeks’ notice that they will take indefinite action if the payments are not forthcoming.

Liberian port workers protest

Port workers at the Freeport of Monrovia, Liberia went on a one-hour protest over two months’ salary arrears owed by management. All vehicles attempting to enter the port were halted. According to *The Analyst* newspaper, a port worker was allegedly beaten up by United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) military personnel policing the port. He was said to be unconscious and rushed to an UNMIL clinic.

One worker told the newspaper that management had

told them there was no money available to pay them for November and December. The president of the workers’ union said that an agreement with management to pay one month’s salary had now been reached and that the union would take court action if this was not forthcoming.



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