

# Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

28 July 2006

## Europe

### **Italian pharmacists continue protests against deregulation**

Pharmacists in Italy staged their second strike in a week July 25 to protest government deregulation plans, leading to the closure of most of the country's 16,500 pharmacies. The strike action had a major impact on the southern half of the country in particular, due to the limited number of public pharmacies. There are only two in the whole region of Calabria.

The pharmacists are protesting plans to allow supermarkets to sell non-prescription drugs.

In Rome, more than more than 1,600 pharmacists demonstrated in the central Piazza Barberini. Delegations of taxi drivers, who have also recently struck in wildcat action against the deregulation of their industry, joined in the protests to show their solidarity.

### **French private sector doctors take industrial action**

Doctors employed in the French private sector began indefinite industrial action on July 25 to protest against the increasing cost of insurance premiums.

The stoppage by surgeons, anaesthetists and obstetricians disrupted some 600 out of 900 private clinics. Doctors are opposed to the premiums as they can take up to 40 percent of their salaries. The premiums cover them in the event of possible lawsuits from patients.

### **Bus drivers in Cherkasy, Ukraine, strike to demand unpaid wages**

On July 19, bus drivers in the city of Cherkasy in the Ukraine struck to demand the payment of back wages. The workers claim that they have not been paid by the city council for the last three months.

During the industrial action, only 24 buses were on the roads, and these transported workers to several large factories outside the city.

## Africa

### **Kenyan mortuary attendants strike to oppose**

### **unsafe conditions**

Mortuary attendants in Kenya walked out on strike June 24 to oppose conditions that have led to the deaths of staff members. The strikers said that in the last five years, 14 of their number had died from diseases contracted while at work.

The strikers' demands include the provision of gloves, aprons and other protective clothing, as well as booths to work in, a vehicle to transport the bodies and the repair of a standby generator. Because of the high fatalities, they are also demanding the payment of a risk allowance of Sh2,000 (US\$27) a month.

### **Chadian oil workers hold three-day strike over pay**

More than 400 oil workers employed by Esso-Chad held a three-day strike from June 18 to 20, to press for parity with the pay of workers doing the same jobs in Cameroon. It was the second strike this month, the first having taken place July 4 to 6.

The pipeline linking Chad and Cameroon is now in operation and is producing large profits for an international consortium including ExxonMobil and Chevron Texaco of the United States and Petronas of Malaysia (Esso-Chad is the local subsidiary of the US ExxonMobil). However, the companies have used the dispute between the World Bank and the government of Chad over development funding to put on hold their own social commitments.

One such issue was career development for employees promised in 2003, but which has not so far been implemented. According to evidence cited by the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions, the area close to the pipeline suffers from greater social problems than the rest of the country, including an HIV/AIDS infection rate of 19.8 percent, compared to 5.5 percent nationally.



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