

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

29 September 2006

Europe

British health workers stage second strike

Workers at five National Health Service (NHS) Logistics depots staged a second 24-hour strike on September 26. The workers are protesting their scheduled transfer from the not-for-profit organisation to the private German operator DHL, set for October 1.

The dispute is the first time that NHS workers have taken strike action for 18 years. Some 1,700 workers are affected who are employed at five sites at Maidstone in Kent, Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk, Alfreton in Derbyshire, Normanton in Wakefield, and Runcorn in Cheshire.

Christmas strike expected over UK Post Office sell-offs

Plans for a major acceleration in the shift of main post offices in the UK to private sector operators are being finalised by the Royal Mail. In response, there have been threats of strike action over the Christmas period from postal unions.

The move comes as part of a five-year business plan being drawn up by Post Office Limited (POL) managing director Alan Cook. Cook is expected to present his plans at a Royal Mail group board meeting on October 3.

His key measures include the introduction of new products to maintain the business's customer base, which is threatened by the 2010 end to the Post Office's card account, which has 4.2 million users. But he will also recommend speeding the transfer of Crown Post Offices—some 500 main post offices—from direct operation by POL to franchisees, such as WH Smith.

Balfour Kilpatrick electricians continue dispute

Some 40 employees of Balfour Kilpatrick working as electricians at Hunterston Nuclear Power Stations A & B are continuing their industrial action over the removal of a 50-pence-per-hour enhancement that was in place for 30 years.

Since September 12 and 13, the workers have taken

strike action each consecutive Tuesday and Wednesday. Their picket line has been moved from an access road under protest to a roundabout on a busy road after British Energy threatened legal action against the Amicus trade union for protesting on its land. Balfour Kilpatrick has refused to reinstate the payment.

Strike knocks Belgian tram lines out of service

Tram drivers employed by the Brussels public transport organisation STIB-MIVB took strike action on September 25 in protest over two incidents involving regional trams.

The strike was concentrated around the transport depots in Brussels' Rue Royale and Rue d'Enghien and took 7 of the capital's 18 lines out of operation.

Portuguese subway workers strike

Subway workers in the Portuguese capital of Lisbon took strike action September 21 and 26 to protest a new labour accord that they said would strip them of health and retirement benefits.

Africa

Nigerian civil servants hold warning strike

Civil servants belonging to the Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU) at the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) began a one-week warning strike on September 20. The action was to protest the introduction of a Guarantor's form and Code of Ethics by the management.

According to the *Daily Champion* (Lagos) the strikers gathered outside the main tax office in the centre of Abuja and shouted slogans demanding the removal of top management officials of the FIRS for attempting to introduce measures without seeking their consent.

The strike has disrupted management plans for the introduction of "Project FACT," an electronic tax-payment system.

South African striker shot dead by police

Ephraim Mvulane, a striking employee of the South African company Karan Beef, in Johannesburg, has died in hospital after being shot, allegedly by police,

according to his union, the SA Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (Saccawu). Mvulane died in Natalspruit Hospital on September 20, after being shot four times. The workers at Karan Beef have been on strike since July, in support of demands for a 12 percent pay increase and an increase in the minimum monthly wage to R2000 (US\$261).

Saccawu regional chairperson Mike Dreyer told the *South African Press Association* (Sapa) that on September 15, security guards “in collaboration with” police went to the homes of striking workers in a township in Heidelberg and intimidated them. A few days later, they returned and tried to force Mvulane and others into a police van. “When they resisted going into the police van, the police decided to open fire,” he said.

A spokesperson for East Rand police claimed that the police fired warning shots and that they acted in self-defence. The case has been reported to the Independent Complaints Directorate.



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