

# Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

6 October 2006

## Europe

### Greek school teachers continue strike

A strike by Greek primary school teachers over pay has continued into its third week. On October 2, the primary school teachers were joined by teachers at secondary schools, who began a 48-hour strike, also over pay. Schools across the country have closed as a result.

On October 2, riot police attacked a demonstration of school teachers and their supporters in Athens. The demonstration was planned to march to Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis's official residence, but police fired tear gas at the marchers. Dozens of demonstrators were reportedly injured in front of the parliament, with some strikers alleging that riot police used brass knuckles.

### Telecom Italia staff strike to oppose planned sell-off

Workers employed by Telecom Italia took industrial action on October 4 to protest plans by the company to sell off its mobile phone unit. The stoppage was called by the CGIL union, which reported that 80 percent of the company's 63,000 employees observed the strike.

An estimated 1,000 employees demonstrated in northern Milan, where they criticised the plan of the outgoing chairman Marco Tronchetti Provera. Last month, he proposed that Telecom Italia create two separate entities for its mobile phone business and part of its fixed-line business, with the new focus of the group to be broadband and media services.

Provera resigned on September 15 and was replaced by Guido Rossi, who was Telecom Italia's chairman when it was privatised in 1997. The company has debts of 41.3 billion euros.

### German rail workers strike over privatisation and job security

On September 29, 1,700 rail workers in Germany held a warning strike in a dispute over privatisation and job cuts. The strike resulted in train delays in three German states—North Rhine-Westphalia, Saarland and

Rhineland-Palatinate. Commuter and regional train service was affected in several large cities, including Cologne, Düsseldorf and Dortmund.

For the past two weeks, the Transnet and GDBA trade union has been involved in negotiations with Deutsche Bahn, the state-owned railway company, over the issue of job security and privatisation. The German government intends to sell off up to half of the railway company for billions of euros in 2008.

During the negotiations, Deutsche Bahn stated that it could not guarantee railway workers' jobs through 2010 if the government decided to sell only transport operations and keep the rail network, including tracks and stations, in public hands.

### Welsh teachers strike in dispute over new pay structure

Teachers at the 800-pupil Pontllanfraith Comprehensive secondary school near Blackwood in south Wales took strike action on October 5 in a dispute over a new pay structure.

The 35 teachers are protesting the new system of "extra responsibility" payments, which unions say have seen some teachers losing up to £1,500 a year.

The school has called in the conciliation service ACAS in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

## Africa

### Ghanaian teachers on strike to demand better pay

Hundreds of teachers belonging to the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) in the Upper West Region of Ghana began a one-week strike on October 2 to demand a pay increase. According to the *Statesman*, the strikers are demanding the immediate resignation of the entire leadership of GNAT.

The teachers are supporting the strike currently being waged by the Ghana National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and are demanding that teachers be put on the same salary levels as workers in the health sector, in line with the Ghana Universal Salary Structure.

At a news conference in the northern city of Wa, Khalid Abdul-Rahman, a spokesman for the teachers, read out a statement explaining their demands and solidarising with those of NAGRAT. Around 300 teachers, wearing red headbands and armbands, attended the event.

Part of the statement said, “We have no confidence in the leadership of GNAT and hereby call on the general secretary and all regional and district secretaries of GNAT to resign with immediate effect.” It called for all the positions in the GNAT hierarchy to be non-full-time and subject to elections and time limitations. If no positive response was received from the government by October 6, members would “put into action plans they were withholding from the public.”

The strike of NAGRAT members is continuing despite a plea from the minister of education asking them to return to the classroom.

### **Strike at Barclays Bank, Ghana**

Workers at Barclays Bank, Ghana, are on strike over salaries. The strike began on October 2 after staff received their monthly payments. Both the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Commission went into talks aimed at ending the strike.

According to the *Ghana News Agency*, the strikers locked themselves inside the bank building.

### **Nigerian college staff on strike over non-payment of salaries**

Academic and non-academic staff at the Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, have begun an indefinite strike to protest the non-payment of their salaries. Half their salaries were unpaid for the last five months, and they have not yet received any salary for August or September.

The unions involved, the Academic Staff Union and the Non-Academic Staff Union, said they had been trying to negotiate a settlement with the commissioner for education for some time, but nothing has been done.



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