

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

13 July 2007

Europe

Teachers strike at school in Denbigh, North Wales

On July 12, some 45 teachers at a secondary school in Denbighshire, North Wales, began a 24-hour strike in a dispute over pay and working practices. The teachers are employed at Denbigh High School and are members of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers.

Denbigh High School has more than 900 pupils and was forced to close for a day as a result of the action.

The action is the latest in a dispute that began 18 months ago. In 2006, schools in Wales came under a new payment structure, whereby teaching and learning responsibility payments (TLRs) replaced the previous system of management allowances. Since then, members of the NASUWT have raised “serious concerns about working practices at the school.”

Strike at BBC Children’s TV network

Employees of the BBC Children’s TV network, the CBBC Education Unit, staged a one-day strike on July 10 to protest a plan by management to make six of the staff compulsorily redundant. The workers picketed TV Centre, the BBC headquarters in London, during the day with the other six colleagues in their department.

The six staff have a total of 100 years of experience working at the BBC. The BECTU trade union is demanding that the BBC transfer the six to other departments and make the losses from amongst 15 staff who have volunteered to take redundancy.

Workers stage unofficial strike at Volvo truck plant in Oostakker, Belgium

On July 5, employees at the Volvo truck factory in Oostakker, Belgium, walked off the job in wildcat strike action in a dispute over pay. The FGTB trade union was involved in negotiations with management when the auto workers walked off the job. In a vote on July 5, action staff voted by a margin of 78 percent in favour of rejecting management’s initial pay offer of 500 euros. The workers then began the walkout at 10

a.m. local time. Management responded by doubling the offer, but this was also rejected the following day by a majority of 67 percent.

Auto workers strike at Opel plant in Antwerp

Auto workers on the evening shift at the General Motors-owned Opel plant in Antwerp, Belgium, struck for three hours on July 6, claiming irregularities in their pay slips. Management said that it would investigate all alleged mistakes, and the strikers returned to work.

The plant has been the scene of numerous strikes and protests over the past few months as a result of a large-scale restructuring project at Opel, including several thousand job losses.

On July 1, the morning shift struck in unofficial strike action to protest the plan to shed 2,300 jobs.

Africa

South African union calls for metal and engineering workers to return to work

Striking South African metal and engineering workers have been instructed to return to work by the “Solidarity” trade union.

Union spokesperson Jaco Kleynhans told the media that the employers had improved their offer, although details have not been revealed. The employers have been offering a 7.8 percent wage increase. Until recently, the unions were demanding a minimum increase of 10 percent, four weeks’ severance pay instead of one, improved shift allowances, leave enhancement pay, and the backdating of any agreement to July.

Some 70 percent of the union’s 28,000 members in the sector had stopped work since the union had called the strike on July 9. The National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) said that it would not call for a return to work until an official announcement had been made on July 11.

South African park workers on strike over union recognition

Park workers belonging to the Health and Other

Services Personnel Trade Union of SA (Hospersa) are on strike in the SA National Parks (SANParks) in a bid to make their employers recognise the union and negotiate with it over wages and conditions. The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration has ruled that union members should be allowed to picket inside the parks.

The employers have refused to recognise Hospersa until it represents more than half of its employees. The union spokesperson said, “Hospersa has more than a 1,200 members. Sanparks cannot expect to have only one union representing workers.”



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