

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

7 September 2007

Europe

Mental health workers in Manchester continue strike

Mental health workers in Manchester, England staged a further three days of strike action this week to protest the suspension of a shop steward.

The action involves some 700 nurses in Unison who walked out beginning Monday and staged picket lines at North Manchester General hospital, Manchester Royal Infirmary and Wythenshawe hospital. The stoppage affected all in-patient, hospital and community psychiatric services across the city.

An initial three-day strike was held last week to protest the sacking of Karen Reissmann. In June, Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust suspended Reissmann, a psychiatric nurse with more than 25 years in the profession, for allegedly bringing the trust into disrepute and misusing her time as a community psychiatric nurse. Reissman maintains she was suspended for consistently opposing cuts in social services and mental healthcare in the city.

Unison announced this week that a demonstration is to be held on September 9 in the Peace Gardens near the Town Hall in Manchester to “defend the right to speak out against cuts and privatisation of public services without fear of being sacked.”

Pilots at CityLine airline strike in Germany

Pilots at CityLine, a subsidiary of the German airliner Lufthansa, took strike action on August 31 to demand changes to shift rules and more days off. The members of the Vereinigung Cockpit trade union struck following the breakdown in negotiations with the company last month.

The action resulted in the cancellation of 23 flights with a further 60 flights delayed. A total of 3,500 passengers were affected by the dispute.

On August 28 and 29 Cityline pilots, who are members of the Verdi trade union, also took strike action. The union demanded that CityLine pilots’ pay

to be brought into line with that of the Lufthansa pilots. CityLine operates small aircraft with up to 90 seats and flies to smaller airports in Germany and nearby European countries.

Romec engineering and admin grades take first national strike in Britain

Staff at Royal Mail contractors Romec staged their first ever national strike on August 31.

Engineering and Administration Grades workers walked off the job for 24 hours to oppose management’s offer of a 2.5 percent pay increase with conditions attached. Management is also seeking to impose the introduction of the GPS navigation system at the company. The Communication Workers Union members voted by 12 to 1 in favour of industrial action.

Workers at crisps factory in Republic of Ireland vote to strike

Staff at the Tayto crisps factory in County Armagh in the Republic of Ireland voted by 97 percent to strike in a dispute over pay. Some 250 workers are employed at the plant and are members of the Unite trade union.

The ballot followed an announcement by the firm that from October there would be no pay rise beyond that required to meet minimum wage requirements. The union claims that most workers at the plant earn only the minimum wage level of £5.35 an hour. In October the minimum wage will rise to £5.52 an hour.

Africa

Strike at South African battery manufacturers

Around 300 workers at Willard Batteries based in Port Elizabeth began indefinite strike action September 3. Demands of workers, members of the National Union of Metal Workers (NUMSA), include a 10 percent wage increase, three weeks severance pay for each year served and a housing subsidy.

The union will call on members working for major car manufacturers such as Ford and Volkswagen not to handle products produced by Willard.

Irvin Jim, the union’s regional secretary, threatened

sympathy action at Willard's supplier companies and at its sister company Aberdare cables in support of the action.

Anglo Platinum workers strike

Around 1,500 workers belonging to NUMSA began indefinite strike action Monday at Rustenburg in North West Province. Anglo Platinum runs a smelting and refining operation for precious metals.

The workers accused management of renegeing on a wage deal. Donald Mntlane, the local NUMSA organiser, stated, "Employers had agreed to a 10 percent wage increase offer for the term on one year in the CCMA (Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration) mediation, but later demanded that the term be extended for the second year at a reduced increase of 9.5 percent."

Uganda health workers strike

Workers at the Bugembe Health Centre began strike action last week against their working conditions. The health centre has around 35 workers and 100 patients attend the centre each day.

Amongst their grievances is that workers were regularly victimised by being transferred to other sites if they raised issues. The centre lacks medicines and the ambulance attached to the centre is used for private work. According to an allafrica.com report, a baby died as a result of the ambulance not being available.



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