Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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The World Socialist Web Site *invites workers and other readers to* contribute *to this regular feature.*

Postal strike looms in France

A national strike by post office workers has been called on September 23 to protest government plans that unions say will lead to the privatisation of the French postal service, La Poste. Six unions have said they will demonstrate against the government's decision to change the status of La Poste from *établissement public* to *société anonyme*—a move seen as a precursor to selling off parts of the service. The president of La Poste, Jean-Paul Bailly, said the company would become a *société anonyme* from January 2010 with the possibility of private investment a year later.

Germany's engineers and metalworkers set to strike over pay

According to *Reuters*, August 29, members of the industrial trade union IG Metall are set to stage temporary strikes to press their pay demands.

The union has said it plans to make a pay demand recommendation for the 3.5 million workers throughout Germany's engineering and metalworking sector on September 8. The current wage contract in the sector expires at the end of October.

In last year's wage round, the union demanded 6.5 percent and eventually settled for a two-stage wage increase of 4.1 percent and 1.7 percent in a contract running for 19 months.

Last week, Gesamtmetall, the employers' association for the engineering sector, warned workers that they needed to "temper" their expectations for pay rises due to the worsening economic crisis.

Further strikes planned by council workers in Scotland

Following local government employers' refusal to increase a pay offer of 2.5 percent, Scotland faces further council strikes.

After 150,000 council staff across Scotland rejected the below-inflation offer and took one day's strike action on August 20, the employers' body, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), indicated they would discuss an improved offer.

However, CoSLA said increasing the pay offer in the current economic climate would result in service and job cuts.

Further strike action by local authority staff in Scotland has now been described as "inevitable".

Meanwhile, according to the BBC, hundreds of other civil and public servants voted for strike action that could cause serious disruption to the judicial system.

The unions, Unite, GMB and Unison now plan to meet within the next week to coordinate further strike dates.

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In a similar dispute over a below-inflation pay offer, Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) workers in five agencies and public bodies voted for strike action and work-to-rule.

Staff from the Scottish Courts Service, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, sportscotland and the National Museums of Scotland are dissatisfied with a pay offer of 2 percent.

UK: Department of Transport staff strike

A one-day strike on August 29 by Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) members employed at the Department for Transport (DfT) in the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) sector caused "significant disruption," the union reported.

Many local offices were closed, and there was only a restricted service in those remaining open. At the Swansea headquarters, 80 percent of staff reportedly stayed away from work, while in Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow, the figure was reported to be 90 percent. Local offices closed included Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Bangor, Chester, Birmingham, Leeds, Stockton, Truro, Bournemouth, Portsmouth, Brighton and Boreham Wood.

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London bus drivers in 24-hour strike over pay

Around 2,500 employees of the bus company First took strike action August 26.

Members of the union Unite want a standard £30,000 rate of pay for drivers across the bus network. Workers decided to go on strike after rejecting a 4 percent pay increase on August 24.

A union spokesman said the walkout had been "solid," but First said a number of routes were running. Altogether, around 80 routes through London were disrupted.

The industrial action also includes drivers who work for First Capital East and Centrewest London Buses, which operate under First.

Unite members plan a further 48-hour walkout on September 12.

Czech Siemens workers hold warning strike

Workers at Siemens SKV plant in Prague held a warning strike August 20, following the company's announcement that it intended to close the facility.

All staff at SKV Prague took part in the strike action, which was organised by the Czech Metalworkers' Federation (OS KOVO), an IMF affiliate.

The announced closure follows Siemens AG's earlier statement that it plans to cut 16,750 jobs, about 4 percent, of its workforce worldwide.

OS KOVO has said that the offer presented by the Siemens management to the workers facing job losses is inadequate and said further action will be forthcoming if no progress is made in planned talks.

Nigerian airline workers take action over working conditions

Employees of British Airways (BA) in Nigeria have been taking action to protest against their poor working conditions. They have accused BA of taking unilateral decisions about their conditions of service.

Members of the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE) staged a protest at the British Airways office in Lagos, complaining of management's refusal to implement a new salary structure and to make other improvements.

The workers have been following a work-to-rule and have threatened to escalate the action into a full strike. They are also complaining about the large number of British expatriates being employed, allegedly including one who had taken the place of a Nigerian.

Ugandan road workers on strike over unpaid wages

Workers on the Ugandan Masaka-Mbarara highway went on strike on August 27 over unpaid wages. The 35 workers are employed by Reynolds Construction Co. and have already constructed 15 km of the highway.

Ugandan sugar factory workers on strike

Casual workers at the Kakira Sugar Works in Uganda took strike action on August 26, to protest against harassment by supervisors, low pay and lack of lunch provision. Most of the workers on strike were cane cutters.

The police later moved in and took control of the plantation. A police spokesman said that the situation was returning to normal, but that some of the strikers were refusing to return to work. The Regional Police Commander took charge of the operation to end the strike.

Cameroon council employees protest stalled pay increase

Hundreds of workers employed by the five urban councils in Douala, Cameroon, gathered outside the City Council August 27.

Their protest was directed at the authority's failure to implement a 15 percent wage increase decreed by the government in March. The angry demonstration saw the gates to council offices blocked, stopping all activities at the City Council centre in Bonanjo.

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