

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

25 January 2013

Warning strike at Coca-Cola in Germany

Thousands of workers at Coca-Cola in Germany are staging short-term warning strikes in a dispute over wages.

Staff at two Coca-Cola facilities in Bavaria began industrial action Monday, and co-workers at around 50 other sites will also take action.

The NGG union is seeking a 6 percent raise over the next year for Coca-Cola's 10,600 employees in Germany. Coca-Cola has offered 2.5 percent this year and 2 percent next year. The corporation and unions are next scheduled to meet January 30.

Hamburg Airport strike

On January 18, airport workers went on strike at Hamburg Airport in protest against low pay.

The Verdi union is calling for an hourly wage of €14.50 for its members, who currently earn €11.80 per hour.

The strike disrupted security operations and delayed flights. Only one of 20 security checkpoints had opened, with approximately 95 percent of the passenger security-check staff participating in the strike.

Paris primary school teachers strike

The majority of primary schools in Paris were closed Tuesday, as teachers took industrial action over the government's plans to make children attend classes five days a week instead of the current four days.

As part of his election campaign last year, President Francois Hollande pledged to add a half-day of classes on Wednesday—currently a day off—and shorten the school day for the rest of the week.

Civil servants at UK education department ballot for strike over jobs

Civil servants at the Department for Education are to be balloted for industrial action over 50 percent budget cuts, the threatened closure of the department and plans to cut 1,000 jobs across the country.

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union says Education Secretary Michael Gove is using the department as an ideological test-bed for wider civil service cuts and to help drive through more Academies and Free Schools—the proliferation of which neither the PCS nor the teaching unions have opposed.

Gove plans to make 1,000 civil servants in the department redundant within two years, cutting even deeper than official Treasury requirements.

Staff at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust in five-day strike

Administration and clerical staff at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust are to go on a five-day strike next week in protest at plans to impose pay cuts of up to £2,800 a year.

Managers at Mid Yorkshire, which runs Pinderfields, Pontefract and Dewsbury hospitals, want to downgrade the pay of staff including medical secretaries and receptionists to help save £24 million.

The plans target low-paid and mainly female members of staff, who have already staged four days of strikes. Trust bosses previously offered a deal to increase the period staff would be protected from the pay cuts from a year to 18 months and give them six months' pay protection in a lump sum.

But Mid Yorkshire staff had already had their pay protection cut from three years to one year before this and rejected the deal.

Irish HMV staff end sit-in after assurances from receiver

Staff at two HMV music stores in the Republic of Ireland ended their sit-in protests at the weekend after receiving assurances from the receiver Deloitte that they will be paid.

The music and DVD firm's operation in the Republic is in receivership. As a result, its 16 shops have closed. HMV's main UK business, including 10 stores in Northern Ireland, is continuing to trade in administration.

The retailer has 223 UK stores, in total. Most, if not all of these, are expected to close. This will affect a combined workforce of

around 4,000.

Deloitte is attempting to sell the Irish shops.

On January 17, two HMV branches in Limerick were occupied by staff, fighting to get the wages due them. A dozen staff had occupied the store at Crescent Shopping Centre, and a similar number had staged a sit-in at the Cruise Street branch.

HMV staff in Cork followed the example of their colleagues in Limerick and occupied the store in Patrick Street.

24-hour public transport strikes in Rome

A series of 24-hour public transport strikes have been scheduled to take place in Rome today over job security. The two main strikes have been officially called by the Faisa Cisal and Orsa trades unions. The Orsa strike relates to the Termini-Giardinetti regional light railway line, while the Faisa protest will affect the entire ATAC network.

100,000 Slovenian public employees strike over cuts

Around 100,000 public employees have gone on strike, protesting against government austerity measures for the second time in less than a year.

The strikes are in response to a plan to lay off workers and cut wages by up to 5 percent this year. The protests have caused widespread disruption and have been marked by violence.

The strike closed almost all schools, kindergartens and universities in the country of 2 million people. Hospitals are offering limited care with reduced staff.

According to *Deutsche Welle*, 14,000 employees in the metals and electronics industries also went on strike demanding wage increases of up to 7.5 percent.

In addition to last year's 3 percent cut, the government is attempting to narrow its budget shortfall to around 3 percent of national output from 4.2 percent last year. The government is simultaneously being buffeted by a corruption scandal that could deprive the ruling coalition of its majority in parliament.

Workers at three of Spain's bailed-out banks strike over layoffs

Workers at three of Spain's bailed-out banks will stage strikes against mass layoffs. Spanish banks intend to cut thousands of jobs and shrink their balance sheets as a condition of bailout they received from the European Union last year of up to €100 billion (US\$133 billion).

Twenty-thousand layoffs were planned for 2013, almost 10 per

cent of the total. Employees at Bankia have already staged a series of demonstrations, while workers at other smaller banks such as Caja 3 began industrial action in December with 15-minute work breaks.

Spain's banks have shed more than 30,000 jobs since the start of the global financial crisis in 2007, Reuters reported.

Kenyan local government workers end strike

A strike by members of the Kenya Local Government Workers Union began in Nairobi last Thursday. Refuse was not collected, and revenues from parking fees and other charges went uncollected, leading to a reduction in the revenues accruing to the city council.

The workers struck after an agreement reached with the Association of Local Government Employers in October last year that would have given a substantial pay increase and other allowances was not honoured by the employers.

Other local authority workers joined the strike on Monday, with more than 2,000 coming out in the port city of Mombasa. They returned to work on Wednesday, however, after the dispute was referred to the Industrial Court.

Kenyan lecturers strike

A strike by public university lecturers began Monday after the Inter-Public Universities Council Consultative Forum (IPUCCF) failed to pay the first tranche of Sh7.8 billion (US\$90 million) the government promised last September as part of a deal to end a two-week strike.

The IPUCCF says the money has now been released after a computer glitch delayed payment, but Professor Muga K'olale, general secretary of the University Academic Staff Union, insisted none of the money had been paid and vowed to stay out on strike.



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