Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

23 October 2015

Europe

Ongoing strikes at UK tractor factory

The 460 staff at the New Holland tractor manufacturing plant in Basildon, south east England began a 36-hour strike at noon on October 22.

They are members of the Unite union. Their strike is the first industrial action at the site for over 14 years. They have held a series of strikes since the end of September, including two days last week, seeking a 2.4 percent pay rise—the latest company offer of a two percent increase this year followed by a 1.5 percent increase next year has been rejected by the workforce.

Planned redundancies are due at the plant.

Museum staff in Wales take further action

Staff at various National Museum of Wales sites including the National Coal Museum in Blaenavon held a one-day strike and rally outside the National Assembly in Cardiff Tuesday. They are members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

The latest strike was one of a number held since July over plans by the museum to remove premium payments for weekend work. The PCS and museum management agreed to hold negotiations on Monday and suspend future strikes although the Tuesday strike went ahead as planned.

Water workers in Northern England fight pension changes

Around 100 workers at Northumbrian Water began a continuous work-to-rule on Tuesday. They will also impose a ban on “call-outs” and overtime.

Members of the Unite and GMB unions voted by 80 percent for action in response to moves to end the final-salary pension and replace it with a career average plan from January 1, which will yield a lower pension.

The company claims the pension scheme is no longer affordable. The unions point out that £630 million in profits was repatriated last year to the company’s owner, Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings in Hong Kong.

The 44 water workers represented by the Unite union will begin a 24-hour strike on Saturday morning over the same issue.

Walkout by Irish gas terminal workers

Security staff at the Shell gas terminal in Mayo, in the west of Ireland, held a 12-hour strike between 6am and 6pm Monday.

They are members of the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU). The strike is in response to Seneca changing working hours and laying off staff.

German civilian staff at foreign military bases protest

Workers employed at US and other foreign military bases in Germany held a one-day strike Monday. Organised by the Ver.di union, they are seeking a €120 flat rate pay rise, rejecting the 1.3 percent pay increase being offered.

Hundreds of base workers from across Bavaria travelled to the US base at Grafenwoehr where they held a demonstration and then marched to the city hall. Staff held similar demonstrations outside foreign military bases across Germany.

Dutch ambulance staff in third week of dispute

Dutch ambulance workers, members of the FNV union, held a series of strikes this week, the third in a row. They went on strike Monday, Wednesday and are out today. They are still responding to emergency calls but the routine transportation of patients will not take place.

They are demanding a new contract covering pay and conditions and are angry that there has been no progress since the old contract ran out 10 months ago. They are seeking a 2.5 percent pay increase for the current year, better training and that staff over 55 are not put on night duties. The employer has offered 3 percent over two years.

Icelandic public-sector workers hold second strike

A second 48-hour strike by nurses and other public sector staff began at midnight Sunday. It follows a 48-hour strike last week. Around 5,000 workers organised by the Union of Public Workers and the Icelandic Union of Nurses’ Aides came out. The dispute is over the stalling of negotiations for a new contract.

The strike affected around 160 institutions, including health care

© World Socialist Web Site

centres; classes at the University of Iceland were cancelled.

Spanish rail staff demand new agreement

Staff employed by the Spanish state rail company, RENFE, and the rail infrastructure company, ADIF, have been holding three-hour strikes every Friday since the beginning of September.

Called by a group of rail unions including the CCOO, they are pressing for a new collective bargaining agreement and less arduous roles for older staff.

Journalists' federation condemns attacks by police in Hungary

The International Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists organisations have condemned the attacks on journalists covering the refugee crisis on the Hungarian Serbian border last week.

At least six journalists have been attacked. In one incident, Warren Richardson an Australian photographer and Jacek Tacik, a Polish reporter were beaten and then arrested by Hungarian police, accused of illegally entering Hungary. The same day, a TV crew working for Serbian television was brutally beaten by police using truncheons at a border crossing. The TV company has demanded the police be held to account.

Africa

Bus drivers' strike in South Africa

Gautrain bus drivers in South Africa held two one-hour strikes to protest insufficient time for meal breaks. The one-hour strikes took place between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. and again between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., coinciding with meal breaks periods.

The dispute has been ongoing since May, when drivers went on a go-slow and threatened an all-out strike.

Nigerian local government staff protest pay delays

Local government workers in Mopamuro, Nigeria, have been demonstrating against delayed salaries and a proposal to pay only a fraction of their monthly wages. The workers are owed arrears over 15 months and have been receiving only 25 percent of their pay. Now the council is proposing to pay their September salary at 10 percent.

A worker commented: "We are hungry and will prove to them that a hungry man is an angry man."

Strike of Zambian academics

Academics at Zambia's Copperbelt University have resumed their strike. The Academic Staff Union (ASU) went on indefinite strike after receiving no response from the Higher Education Minister after a report had been passed to him detailing changes that the union says need to be made at the university.

The ASU is demanding the vice chancellor and the entire management staff are removed from their posts. A previous vice chancellor was removed after coming into conflict with the union. The strike took place while students are being registered for the new academic year.

Zambian teachers turn down pay offer

Zambian teachers in Lusaka have rejected an incremental pay offer of between four and 10 percent from the government. In cash terms the offer represents K150 ($12) for teaching certificate holders and K500 ($41) for those with a degree.

A Zambian teacher receives around K4000 ($417) per month. The angry meeting that voted against the offer in Lusaka is likely to be replicated as it goes out to the provinces. Inflation has been running at 300 percent over the last two months.

Liberian Ebola care staff protest nonpayment of wages

Liberian health care workers working at four facilities of the Catholic Health Commission (CHC), caring for Ebola patients, are planning a go-slow. They are protesting after not receiving an agreed incentive for caring for Ebola patients.

Staff signed up to the incentive concluded between the government and the CHC in April.

The CHC have been receiving 35 percent of the cost of drugs and funding for top-up staff from the government. The care staff have refused to cooperate with researchers wanting to take blood samples from them.

Protest by Liberian former Ebola workers

Helen Sirleaf, the Liberian prime minister, had to abandon an appointment at a Global Hand Washing Day ceremony on October 15 to avoid protesting ex- Ebola workers. The now disbanded Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU) volunteers are owed $2,500 in promised bonuses for the dangerous work they carried out. The ex-ETU treatment protesters have been following the prime minister around to get her attention, but without success.

Tanzanian tour guide staff announce strike

Members of the Tanzanian Tour Guide Council are proposing a three-week strike after the general election on October 25.

The tour guides, including those for Mount Kilimanjaro, have been trying to resolve ongoing issues since 2013. A meeting in August promised to resolve the matter in 60 days.

© World Socialist Web Site

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site