Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and New Zealand

7 October 2022

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

India: Delhi University teachers hold one-day strike

Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) members held a one-day strike on Monday to oppose the displacement of serving ad hoc teachers during the ongoing selection process for permanent faculty in colleges and departments. Teachers demanded that all ad hoc teachers be absorbed into the university.

The long-pending selection process for permanent faculty was initiated last month. Teachers decided to strike after several long serving ad hoc teachers were not selected for permanent roles. DUTA has threatened to call a three-day strike starting on October 18 if its demands are ignored.

Punjab power distribution workers protest privatisation

Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) Engineers' Association members demonstrated in Patiala on Monday calling for an end of the bidding process for privatisation of the Puducherry Electricity Department (PED). Workers fear that the tender will pave the way for privatisation of the electricity department throughout Puducherry and beyond.

Power engineers across India, including in Punjab, Haryana, and Jammu & Kashmir, observed "Black Day" by holding demonstrations in support of Puducherry electricity workers and against the "repressive" attitude of the Puducherry and central governments.

At least 700 striking PED workers were arrested on Sunday evening after they staged a sit-in at the PED head office in Puducherry as part of the protest. The workers planned to strike indefinitely but the government enacted the draconian Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) and forced them back to work.

Tamil Nadu sanitation workers in Coimbatore end strike after two days

Thousands of sanitation workers and contract labourers from the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation ended their strike on Tuesday after the civic body said it would introduce a resolution in the upcoming council meeting recommending an increase in the daily wage.

The workers began an indefinite strike on October 2 and demonstrated outside the district collector's office in Coimbatore calling for implementation of their 18-point charter of demands. These include permanency of service and increased wages.

Multani Mal Modi College non-teaching staff in Punjab demand pay rise

Non-teaching staff from the Multani Mal Modi College, in Patiala, staged a sit-down protest on September 29. The action was organised by members of the Non-Teaching Employees' Union in response to a call from the Private College Non-Teaching Employees Union, Punjab (Aided & Unaided).

Major demands included implementation of the 6th Pay Commission on par with Punjab government employees, government notification on revised grade pay from December 2011, payment of house rent at revised rates from August 2009 and release of 5 percent interim relief effective from January 2017.

The workers said the state government implemented the 7th Pay Commission for teachers working in colleges but failed to accept the demands of non-teaching employees working in private aided colleges.

Punjab rural childcare workers protest in Tarn Taran

Anganwadi (childcare) workers and helpers staged a sit-down protest in Tarn Taran near Amritsar on Tuesday. They were demanding the filling of all vacant posts, an increase in honorariums and smart phones for doing online work. Protesters submitted their demands to the state assistant commissioner.

The Anganwadi Mulazam Union district branch, which is affiliated to the Centre for Indian Trade Unions, condemned the state government and the Aam Admi party, which came to power in Punjab promising double honorarium for anganwadi workers. The promise has not been honoured despite a lapse of six months.

Punjab Roadways contract workers continue fight for permanent jobs

As part of an ongoing campaign in a fight for permanent jobs and an end to outsourcing, Punjab Roadways (PUNBUS) contract workers protested in Jalandhar by parking their buses in the middle of roads on October 1.

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Their action followed depot demonstrations on September 16 and a three-day walkout by 8,000 members of the Punjab Roadways Punbus PRTC Contract Workers' Union on August 14.

The workers are also opposing the government's privatisation policies. They have accused senior transport department officials of supporting private transport lobby group demands and allowing more private buses to ply commuter routes. The transport minister agreed to meet the workers on October 11 to discuss their demands.

Hydro Tasmania workers strike after rejecting pay offer

Over 70 maintenance workers from the state-owned power generating company Hydro Tasmania struck for 24 hours on Wednesday as the first step in ongoing action that includes work bans and rolling one-hour stoppages. They are taking industrial action for the first time in 10 years.

The Communications Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU) said negotiations with Hydro Tasmania had broken down after 15 meetings over six months. Workers rejected the government's sub-inflation pay rise proposal in a new enterprise agreement.

A spokesman for the CEPU said workers want pay parity with Hydro Tasmania's subcontractors doing the same work but who are paid $15,000 a year more. The union wants six pay increases of 4.5 percent over the life of the agreement which it claimed would bring members' pay in line with the subcontractors.

The CEPU claimed management had rejected all its claims which included workers concerns about understaffing, poor skills mix and retention of apprentices.

Hydro Tasmania has 1,250 employees producing most of Tasmania's power and which feeds into the Australian Power Grid. It runs 30 hydro-electric plants, one gas powered generator and three wind farms. Since 1990, efforts by the Tasmanian government to privatise the enterprise has met with strong community opposition.

The union has allowed Hydro Tasmania to slash the workforce and training of new staff, suppressed workers' wages and allowed the rundown of plant maintenance causing serious operational breakdowns.

Child safety workers in Tasmania strike over unsafe staffing levels

Workers from Tasmania's Child Safety Services walked out for two hours from 12 noon on Wednesday to protest chronic under resourcing. A spokesperson from the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) said Child Safety and the Advice and Referral Line have critically low staff levels and that children reported at risk of neglect or abuse not receiving adequate support.

Workers and supporters from communities across Tasmania rallied in Hobart and Burnie holding placards that read, "Have a heart, child protection needs more staff" and "What about the Kids, child safety is in crisis."

The union said that two meetings with the Liberal state premier Jeremy Rockliff in September had failed to resolve chronic recruitment and retention issues.HACSU claimed that four exhausted workers left the service in September due to excessive workload and stress.

Western Australian public hospital nurses plan to strike

Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) members have notified the state Labor government that they will be attending stop-work meetings between 11 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. on October 12 to discuss ongoing industrial action following a breakdown in negotiations for a new enterprise agreement (EA).

ANF members rejected the government's latest "smoke and mirrors" pay offer (offered to all public sector workers) that will see workers who earn less than $104,000 only paid an extra $60 a week, while workers over that threshold will be paid an extra 3 percent a year. Both will also get a one-off $3,000 sign-on bonus.

The ANF, which represents 39,000 of the state's nurses, midwives and carers, wants the government to also agree to a range of conditions to alleviate chronic hospital understaffing. Nurses are demanding nurse-to-patient ratios of four patients during the day and one nurse to eight patients at night to be written into the proposed enterprise agreement. The current agreement expires on October 11.

Manildra grain-processing plant maintenance workers locked out

Thirteen electrical maintenance workers at the Manildra Group grain-processing plant in Bomaderry, south of Sydney, New South Wales, were locked out by management on Thursday in response to the commencement of industrial action. The workers are members of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) which has been trying to reach a deal with Manildra for a new enterprise agreement for over four months.

The ETU suspended industrial action in mid-September, after management agreed to resume negotiations and made an improved offer. The offer was rejected by workers who want a substantial pay increase and said that their demands for income protection and fatigue management were not addressed. The ETU said Manildra made an improved pay offer but failed to address any of the issues raised in their log of claims.

New Zealand SkyCity casino faces legal action over scab labour during strikes

New Zealand's Auckland-based SkyCity Casino is facing legal action from the Unite Union over allegations that it is hiring contract scabs to backfill positions of striking workers. About 60 casino workers directly employed by SkyCity have been striking and picketing most Saturdays since August for better pay.

Unite is seeking a pay raise to meet the so-called "living wage"—currently $23.65—and has declared that anything less is "not good enough." SkyCity has proposed paying the equivalent of the living wage, but not until after one year's service. The company's offer starts at $22.50, more than a dollar less.

The so-called "living wage," fraudulently promoted by unions covering low-paid workers, is insufficient to live on and rapidly being overtaken by inflation now running at 7.3 percent.

Unite has filed legal action against SkyCity with the Employment Relations Authority, alleging the company is in breach of "good faith" and is undermining bargaining by redeploying non-union workers to do the work of striking staff. According to the Employment Relations Act, workers can't be employed principally for the purpose of performing the work of a striking or locked out employee.

SkyCity contends that because the contract workers are regularly hired

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by them, it is legal to use them to backfill for striking staff.

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