

## Hang 'em!

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international / prose / post

### **Sacked without pay French workers hold company bosses captive**

Workers at a French greetings card firm on Friday sequestered the head of their company and the chief of the Dutch firm which owns it after sacked employees were told they would not get their dues. The protest at the office of French firm Edit66 and the Dutch owner Mercurius, targeted their two chiefs Paul Denis and Merthus Bezemer.

The firm, which has been facing financial problems, is based in the southern French city of Cabestany.

It was bought by Mercurius in the early 1990s and once counted 60 workers but recently employed only 37, of whom 19 were laid off.

The trouble began Friday when the management told those laid off that they would not be given their severance dues agreed earlier "as there is no money," Danielle Casanovas, from the company's works council said.

She said the two men were being allowed to freely move within the company premises.

The town's socialist mayor Jean Vila said he backed the action.

"I find it immoral," he told journalists. "There are laws in France and they have to be respected."

France's economy, the second biggest in the eurozone, has been stagnating in recent months. Unemployment is just shy of the record level of 3.195 million last reached in 1997 and the spending power of French households fell in late 2012 for the first time since 1984.

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