

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

## Honduran teachers threaten strike in 2009

The National Forum of Teaching Organizations (FOM), which represents Honduran public school teachers, declared December 21 that it would mobilize its ranks in 2009 to demand that teachers' back wages be paid. Some teachers are owed nine months pay. FOM leader Eulogio Chavez declared that the decision was taken when the government paid only three teachers in full, out of the 4,000 that are owed money. Government authorities have indicated that no more payments are forthcoming this year.

In November, the teachers threatened to carry out a sit-down strike at hundreds of schools that are used as polling places. Had this occurred, the elections of November 16 would have been disrupted. As a result, many teachers received some of their back pay.

On December 18, Education Minister Marlon Breve announced that in response to government fiscal austerity there would be a hiring freeze for new teachers. Breve also said that the government is considering sacking teachers in some districts. Angry teachers have threatened to invade and sit in at Breve's house on Christmas and New Years Day.

## Mexico: Credit card payment strike in the offing

Tens of thousands of Mexicans are threatening a payments strike to protest usurious interest rates on their credit card debt. The movement is more highly organized in the states of Mexico, Tamaulipas, Michoacan and Jalisco. The credit card holders are demanding that the Mexican Congress impose a ceiling on credit card interest rates.

In addition, the debtors are demanding that banks stop harassing people for late payments. This harassment is being carried out by special teams of lawyers hired by banks to intimidate credit card holders. Many consumer credit cards in Mexico charge rates that exceed 30 percent annually. Over 25 million Mexicans (almost 25 percent of the population) have credit cards. Nearly 9 percent are in arrears.

Mexican Central Bank officials are warning that unless credit card interest rates come down, a peso crisis similar to the one in 1994 will develop. That crisis, which shook the country's banking system, affected banks and other financial institutions.

## Uruguayan municipal workers protest

Striking municipal workers in Concepcion del Uruguay marched and rallied as part of a two-day campaign for higher wages last week. On the evening of December 18, workers surrounded the civic center and burned tires to signal their dissatisfaction with a government wage offer of 1,400 pesos. The strike began on the morning of December 19.

The protesters surrounded municipal offices where

strikebreaking employees continued to work. Workers fought police preventing them from entering a municipal office building, while firefighters attempted to put out the tire fires.

ongoing since October 21.

### **North Carolina strike enters sixth month**

Workers at the Moncure Plywood plant in Moncure, North Carolina, who have been on strike since July 14, are still without a contract. The 114 members of International Association of Machinists Local 369 refused to bow to company demands for 60-hour weeks and concessions over contract language governing holidays and insurance payments.

The strike has been isolated by the IAM. The company continues operations with 102 nonunion workers. It has also been able to hire 70 strikebreakers off the street, including workers laid off from the nearby Siler City poultry plant.

### **Byline strike at Associated Press**

The Newspaper Guild-Communications Workers of America announced December 15 that writers are withholding bylines at the Associated Press over the news agency's demands for a wage freeze, sharp increases in medical costs, and contract language that undermines job security.

The action also includes staff and technology workers who are working to rule and withholding use of personal equipment such as cars and cell phones.

Management is proposing a two-year agreement that calls for a wage freeze in the first year followed by a 2 percent increase in second year. The News Media Guild represents the 1,400 workers at the AP. Talks have been

### **University strikers occupy president's office**

On December 15, over 120 striking faculty occupied the office of the York University president's office demanding answers to a list of 12 questions and for a public forum to discuss vital issues affecting the quality of education.

Three thousand four hundred full- and part-time faculty have been on strike at York University in the north end of Toronto since November 5. Their union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), has been unable to get school negotiators to return to the bargaining table since talks collapsed last month. Daily protests were staged throughout the city over the past week, including a sit-in outside administration offices, but picket lines were taken down at all but two sites.

Key unresolved issues for faculty at York are job security and funding for graduate students. Despite higher revenues from increased enrolment at the school, funding for graduate students has not kept pace. At the same time, many teaching assistants and other faculty have short-term contracts, despite having worked in the same job for up to 15 years.



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