

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

## Guadeloupe: Thousands attend dead striker's funeral

Thousands of striking workers and their supporters attended the funeral of Jacques Bino, who was shot to death last Tuesday. The burial took place in Petite Canal, 30 miles from Point-A-Pitre.

Bino's casket was accompanied during the ceremony by his wife and eight-year-old son. Before the ceremony, Elie Domota, of the Workers' Collective Against Exploitation (LKP), declared that mobilizations would continue.

Earlier, in an interview with the *Journal du Dimanche*, Domota declared that the two sides are far from an agreement. He added that French President Nicolas Sarkozy "hears but he doesn't respond because he fears that this social response will reach France."

On Saturday, thousands of people marched in the streets of Paris in support of the strikes in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The general strike in Guadeloupe has already lasted a month, while on Martinique a similar strike has reached its 18th day.

## Brazil: Unions confront President Lula over jobs

The São Paulo Metal Workers Union demanded last week that Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva adopt urgent measures to prevent the firing of 4,270 workers by the airplane manufacturer Embraer. A

contingent of metal workers picketed the São Paulo plant. A press release from the São Paulo Workers Union declared, "We need concrete measures from the government. We demand a provisional measure that provides job stability for all workers."

On February 19, Embraer announced that the 4,270 workers were being sacked as a result of the world economic crisis that has severely reduced the sale of executive jets and medium-range airplanes. Lula reportedly indicated his "indignation" at the announcement and called on Embraer executives to meet with him in Brasilia.

The Brazilian Workers Central (CUT) announced that it would mobilize protests against the measure next week. Embraer decided to go ahead with the layoffs, which represent 20 percent of its workforce, despite having promised the government not to cut jobs in return for a bailout last year of \$542 million.

Unemployment is now 8.2 percent in Brazil. Since the beginning of the year, 800,000 jobs have been lost.

## Tennessee: Vought workers challenge victimization

Four members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), who took part in the recent 14-week strike against Vought Aircraft Industries in Nashville, are filing papers with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) charging they were unfairly fired for alleged picket line misconduct. The four workers believe the actions were discriminatory in that the company did not fire security personnel or other workers involved in similar clashes.

"I think we were four people that they wanted out of the plant to begin with," Richard Nelms, who has worked 24 years at Vought, told the *Tennessean*. "They saw an opportunity."

Workers are also critical of the IAM, which they charge dropped their grievances and did not negotiate a return-to-work for the victimized workers. "We're not getting help from the union," said Charles Kearns. A spokesman for the IAM said the union, under Tennessee law, could not pursue the grievance.

Vought, which is 90 percent owned by the Carlyle Group, threatened to permanently replace striking workers as it forced through its demand to eliminate pensions for new-hires and freeze pensions for workers with less than 16 years' seniority.



### **Los Angeles: Reality TV workers protest lack of benefits**

Audience members in line for the first live broadcast of *American Idol*, this season's highest-rated television show, heard protests by some 200 writers, union members and supporters against Fremantle Media's failure to provide its writers, drivers and other workers with standard industry health and pension benefits.

"Fremantle is lowering standards for workers all across the entertainment industry," said David Weiss, vice president of the Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW). TV writer Ro Di Salvo stated, "Fremantle wants to pretend that writers don't exist, but we're here. We work hard, we have families, and we need to be able to provide for them like everyone else."

Another WGAW member, Wendy Calhoun, added, "I am a writer that has worked on a lot of reality shows. I loved working in that genre, but I had to leave it and start working on a scripted TV show because I have kids and I need healthcare coverage."

Fremantle Media North America is a multinational production company, producing TV programs for several networks. *American Idol* alone generates billions in revenue.

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