

Workers Struggles: The Americas

7 July 2009

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

Teachers strike in Paraguay

Two hundred and forty thousand teachers, members of the Paraguayan Federation of Educators (FEP,) began a strike of indefinite duration in Asunción to demand a five percent wage increase. Strikers and their supporters marched and rallied in Asunción and later assembled to launch their job action. Education Minister Luis Alberto Riart denounced the job action, calling it “blackmail” against the children.

Government authorities claim that there is no money for raises this year. Instead it has offered a 10 percent raise in 2010.

Argentine dock workers protest sackings

Buenos Aires port workers employed by Delta Docks are protesting against the layoff of three dockworkers at CAT Argentina. A workers’ spokesman declared that on June 24 the company began a campaign of terror against the employees, “a witch hunt, giving workers the third degree, threatening phone calls and taking photographs; techniques that we thought had been left behind. Management intend to make vassals of the workers and to continue exploiting them.

“The perfect pretext for sackings is firings for no reasons due to the economic crisis. We are very skeptical about these arguments.” The spokesperson also reported that the sackings belie the government

claim that no layoffs are taking place.

Alaska national park workers strike against corporate manager

Bus mechanics, radio technicians and warehouse workers at the Denali National Park in Alaska walked out on strike July 1, after six months of negotiations between the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1547 and the park’s concessionaire, Doyon/ARAMARK, broke down without agreement on wages or pensions. Management claims it has already brought in replacement workers for the bus mechanics.

The strike came as the park prepared for the busy 4th of July holiday when they expected increased visitors to the giant 6-million-acre national park that corresponds approximately to the size of the state of Massachusetts. Visitors can only drive 15 miles into the park, after which tour buses take over. Strikers report some eight buses have already broken down.

Pennsylvania-based ARAMARK Corporation launched a joint venture with the Alaska Native regional corporation in the 1990s to take over the administration of transportation, lodging and other services. It currently employs about 970 workers. After establishing the joint venture, ARAMARK slashed wages for Denali Park bus drivers from \$16 an hour to just \$8. Last year, more than 120 park bus drivers struck in an effort to recoup wages.

Chicago hotel workers strike

Workers at Chicago’s Hilton Suites went on strike

July 3, as Teamsters Local 727 charged management with unfair labor practices. The union claims management negotiators have refused to provide documentation to back their claims of economic difficulty.

“In failing to hold up its end of the negotiation process, the company has consistently denied concessions to its hardworking employees for reasons it cannot substantiate,” said Local 727 Secretary-Treasurer John Coli. The strike involves hotel door staff and bellmen at the Hilton’s property located on Magnificent Mile.

Eastern Ontario support workers strike

Disability support workers at Community Living Association Lanark in a region southwest of Ottawa went on strike at midnight, July 3, after the collapse of mediated talks.

The 90 strikers are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and do support work with people with mental and other disabilities. Since their last contract expired at the end of March, management has refused to negotiate a pension for the works and is also demanding concessions on wages and staffing.

The union says that aside from improved job security and wages, the workers are merely trying to achieve pension provisions that would not cost the company anything and that have been granted to other Association of Community Living (ACL) agencies in the province. The union has also expressed concern over the treatment of patients by unqualified replacement workers during the strike.

Blockade ends at auto parts plant

An 11-day protest, which included a blockade at the shut down BBI Enterprises in Ajax, east of Toronto, ended with the affected workers winning some of the money owed to them due to the plant shut-down despite numerous court injunctions against them.

The company, which had supplied parts to companies such as Chrysler and GM, abruptly closed shop on June 18, laying-off 22 workers who were told they would not be paid monies they were owed because its customers couldn’t pay their debts. Under pressure of a blockade initiated by the workers which prevented the removal of materials and equipment from the plant, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) extracted certain assurances from the auto companies for payments to the workers.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact