

Workers Struggles: The Americas

21 July 2009

Honduran workers protest June 28 coup

Workers at the University of Honduras in San Pedro, Sula, went on strike on July 16. The workers are demanding the return of President José Manuel Zelaya who was deposed by the Honduran military on June 28. The workers closed down the gates of the campus and prevented professors and students from coming in.

In Tegucigalpa, the Resistance Front Against the Military Coup (FRCGE) called for a national strike this week to demand the return of President Zelaya. The announcement came in an assembly on Sunday in which workers discussed mediation between Zelaya and coup President Roberto Micheletti, which are being presided over by Costa Rican President Óscar Arias. Workers denounced the negotiations and demanded Zelaya return without conditions. The organization plans to barricade roads leading to those companies they consider supporters of the coup.

The majority of Honduras' 60,000 teachers are also on strike demanding Zelaya's return

Colombian oil workers end strike

On July 17, workers in the Department of Santander ended a two-week strike that paralyzed production at 110 oil wells in northern Colombia. German Osman, president of the Workers Sindicalist Union (USO), declared that the strike was ended because, "We reached an agreement with management on how to carry out negotiations to solve the problems of the

workers and the community."

The strike began over a conflict between security guards employed by Colombian oil company Ecopetrol and local inhabitants who demanded a say on hiring.

Pennsylvania electrical workers end strike

Some 500 Pennsylvania electrical workers ended their two-month strike against Pennsylvania Electric Company (Penelec) after voting on a new three-year contract concluded July 18. The final agreement freezes wages during the first year, followed by 2.5 percent wage increases in the remaining two years.

The company agreed to drop its demand that, in the words of one worker to the *Tribune-Democrat*, would require employees to "be at their beck and call 24/7, 365 on a whim." The new agreement retains language that requires the company to provide 72 hours notice before changing a worker's schedule.

The workers, members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 459, are comprised of linemen, substation electricians, meter readers and support personnel in locations across Pennsylvania, such as Erie, Towanda, Clearfield, Oil City and Johnstown.

Cleveland city water workers strike over retroactive pay

Division of Water workers in Cleveland, Ohio went on strike July 17 demanding a two percent retroactive pay hike similar to other city employees. Mayor Frank Jackson called the request unreasonable.

The Municipal Construction Equipment Operators' Labor Council Union, which is bargaining for the 90 striking workers, wants the pay raise to go back to 2007 and claims that a special enterprise fund generated from the sale of water to customers has a \$10 million surplus that could easily cover the raise.

New York hotel workers continue protest strike

Hotel workers at the Holiday Inn Express in Albany, New York, continue their strike over firings and the denial of a fair vote on forming a union. Workers began their protest back in April and are demanding the right to unionize and the reinstatement of workers who were victimized during their organizing campaign.

Becky Wallis, a breakfast attendant, told WNYT Channel 13, "They told me I was fired because of my performance, but two weeks prior to them firing me, seven of them gave me letters of recommendation saying I was an excellent employee."

Toronto warehouse workers strike

Around 325 workers employed at the Zellers Scarborough distribution centre in east end Toronto went on strike July 16 against a raft of concession demands by the department store giant.

The strikers, who are represented by the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW), are facing company demands for wage cuts of \$8 an hour for material handlers and layoffs of up to a quarter of unionized staff. In addition the company is seeking a range of cuts to benefits and increased use of temporary and contract labor.

The company, which is owned by Hudson's Bay Company, claims the cuts are necessary due to the downturn in the economy. No talks are currently scheduled, although union leaders say they are anxious to continue negotiations.

Hamilton steelworkers locked out

Forty workers employed by Multiserve at Arcleor Mittal Dofasco in Hamilton, Ontario, were escorted off the premises on July 10 after a strike deadline affecting 150 workers came and went.

The workers who are employed with MultiServ Group, which does slag recycling for Dofasco and other companies, are represented by the United Steelworkers union. Workers voted 100 percent in favor of strike action against company demands to cut wages by 15 percent and reduce pension and benefits. Despite this, USW officials kept workers on the job past the strike deadline, leaving it up to the company to lock them out. The company, which is based in Pennsylvania, also cited the economic crisis as the rationale for its unprecedented concession demands.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact