

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

3 August 2010

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

## Puerto Rican teachers vote to strike

Puerto Rico Teachers Association delegates voted unanimously to strike at an emergency meeting last Friday. About 500 delegates of the union, which represents over 30,000 active members and 11,000 retirees, voted at the meeting.

The strike is scheduled to begin the first day of school, this Wednesday, August 4. The *Puerto Rico Morning Sun* quoted Aida Diaz, the union's president, as saying, "Our organization is united in this. We will coordinate our efforts with the (Teachers) Federation and other union groups. The teacher must be respected." She said that the union would not move on the strike without reaching consensus among other organizations.

Other issues were voted on at the meeting as well, particularly the Commonwealth Retirement Fund, which faces bankruptcy by 2013 if new funding sources are not found. Thus, the delegates voted for measures recommending the transfer of moneys from closed schools to the fund instead of to local municipalities, selling off the land from closed or relocated schools, and a measure that "asks the government to cut a maximum of 10 percent in administrative expenses and to stop all retirement windows until the Fund achieves solvency," the *Sun* reports.

Despite the strike vote, the union president expressed willingness to continue to impose sacrifices on teachers to fill the budget shortfall. Declaring, "We recognize the

severity of the current economic situation and that's why we are prepared to do our part," Diaz proposed that "for every 3 percent that the government increases in their pension allocation, our teachers will add 1 percent."

## Uruguayan teachers call three-day strike

Members of the teachers union ADES in Montevideo assembled Friday and resolved to hold a three-day strike August 10, 11 and 12 to protest a 4.5 percent cost-of-living allowance proposed by the government's economic team. The teachers federation Fenapes wants a 6 percent adjustment.

Last Friday, teachers in the capital's schools staged a 24-hour stoppage that included a demonstration in front of the Torre Ejecutiva, where the Uruguayan president's office is located. They will meet August 12 to "analyze new mobilizations, among which is an indefinite strike," reports *El Pais*.

The director of ADES, Luis Martínez, told the daily: "There is a fighting spirit among the teachers in defense of public education. Despite the discounts, we continue to struggle for this education which has been promised in the electoral campaigns but at the hour of fulfilling them are set aside."

However, according to a director of the Uruguayan Federation of Teachers, "For many people it is difficult to carry out a stoppage against Mujica," referring to the recently elected president José Alberto Mujica Cordano, a former leftist guerrilla who was elected based on illusions that he would carry out a program beneficial to the working class.

## **Chilean transport workers protest nonpayment of wages**

About 100 members of the Transaraucarias transportation workers union demonstrated last week in front of La Moneda Palace, seat of the Chilean government, to demand overdue salary payments. Joined by women, children and family members, many of the participants wore buttons denouncing the Transport Minister Felipe Morandé and President Sebastián Piñera.

The workers have not been paid for two months, and according to one union official, Oscar Ferrada, “most families have had their lights cut off and pretty soon the water as well; we have had no salary for two months while Mr. Piñera sits, seeing us protest, our children don’t have milk or bread.”

The workers, who were accompanied by Gustavo Hasbun, a member of the Transport Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, called on the government to intervene in the conflict, after meeting with the comptroller to order an investigation into liability in the case of former minister Rene Cortazar, who the senator accused of negligence.

On the same day, as reported in *El Ciudadano*, the Workers Autonomous Center (CAT) held a press conference calling for preparations to “stop all Transantiago (the bus service that employs the drivers), all businesses.” The president of the federation, Oscar Olivos, said that “today we see mobilizations in various businesses and we believe it is a warm-up. The workers are getting bored, they got tired of being maltreated, being killed, of having workdays of 14 to 15 hours.”

The workers have vowed to broaden and intensify their actions if the situation is not rectified soon.

## **St. Louis pharmaceutical strike continues as lockout**

Four hundred twenty workers at the Mallinckrodt

pharmaceutical chemical plant in St. Louis are continuing a job action, now a lockout, following the rejection by management of a union offer of a return to work. Following 11 weeks of strike action, the United Auto Workers Local 1887 offered to return its members to work under the old contract two weeks ago while negotiations continued.

Mallinckrodt, and its parent company Covidien (a division spun off from Tyco International), have refused to negotiate, instead staffing the plant with transferred and newly hired nonunion staff in an attempt to unilaterally push through wage and benefit cuts, including a freeze on pensions and the elimination of retiree health care.

## **Striking New York Mott’s workers dispatch pickets to other plants**

Striking workers at Mott’s apple products plant in Williamson, New York are expanding picketing to plants in Virginia and Illinois as their walkout enters its eleventh week. The workers will put up picket lines and distribute leaflets to workers at the National Fruit plant in Winchester, Virginia and the Bowman Apple Products plant in Mt. Jackson, Virginia where the union claims struck work is being performed.

Other strikers will be heading to Mott’s parent company’s Dr. Pepper Snapple plant in Northlake, Illinois. The union alleges that Mott’s has transferred employees from its Illinois plant to New York as strikebreakers.

About 300 members of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union went on strike March 23 to protest Mott’s demands for cuts in wages, pensions and medical benefits under conditions where Dr. Pepper Snapple recorded a record \$555 million in profits for 2009.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**