

Ground workers strike Toronto's Pearson International Airport

## Workers Struggles: the Americas

1 August 2017

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

### Ground workers strike Toronto airport

Seven-hundred ground workers at Toronto's Pearson International Airport—Canada's busiest—have been on strike since last Thursday after voting 95 percent in favor of job action the same day.

Members of the Teamsters Canada union, workers voted to reject the latest offer from Swissport, the company that provides staff for cleaning, cargo and baggage handling, and other services for a number of major airlines at Pearson. Union negotiators say they did not recommend the contract due to differences over scheduling and the use of untrained temporary workers.

The union has filed a complaint over the company hiring 250 replacement workers, warning the public that because they lack proper qualification there will be significant delays in service during the strike. The airport Authority has also assured the public that there are contingency plans being implemented but have not provided any further details.

### Coca-Cola hit by strike in B.C.

Some 370 truck drivers and sales and production workers in the lower mainland of British Columbia went on strike against Coca-Cola Refreshments Canada last week after talks between the union and the company broke down over a wide range of issues.

The workers have been without a contract since April of this year, and according to negotiators for the Teamsters, the two sides are far apart over wages, pensions, and benefit provisions in a new contract. The local supply of a number of beverage products including Coke is threatened by the strike, and some suppliers have already turned to other facilities out of province to make up the shortfall.

### Costa Rican judicial workers strike over pension system

Some 13,000 Costa Rican judicial workers have been on strike since July 19 to protest changes in the nation's pension system. Thousands of judicial workers marched on the legislative assembly building that day to protest the changes and the refusal of the lawmakers to consider suggestions by their union.

The union's proposal would have raised the retirement age and capped pension payments, though not as much as the one before the legislature.

### Chilean Walmart workers vote to strike for pay raise

In a vote held by its union on July 28, workers for Walmart in Chile voted to strike for higher wages. The retail giant, which bought the Chilean "hypermarket" chain Lider in 2009, has 380 outlets.

The Lider Inter-enterprise Syndicate (SIL) represents more than 16,500 workers. Demonstrations in front of

Walmart stores have not brought any results, leading to the strike vote.

According to a Reuters report, this week, “either the union or the company may request government-mediated talks that would last five days to try to reach an agreement on a collective contract and avert the strike.” Any negotiations would be the first under new labor legislation and could establish precedents for the industry.

## **Argentine sugar workers strike against layoffs, for better working conditions**

Workers at the La Esperanza sugar processing plant in Argentina’s Jujuy province began a strike July 26 to demand that some 300 laid-off sugar harvest workers be reinstated. About 600 workers gathered at the entrance to the plant and marched to demand higher payments for harvests during the six months in which grinding of sugar cane takes place.

The Jujuy government, which runs the plant, is in the process of selling it to an investor group, and laid off the workers as a cost-cutting measure. Government officials met with the workers’ union, but only “to tell us to lift the strike, nothing more,” said union secretary Sergio Juarez. He added that there would be an assembly this week to decide what further actions to take.

## **Instructors at Oklahoma college strike over drastic health care increases**

Aerospace mechanics instructors at Spartan College in Tulsa, Oklahoma, went on strike July 24 after negotiators for the school demanded the union agree to a drastic increase in health care coverage before discussing other issues. The United Aerospace Workers Local 286 has been in negotiations with the college since the expiration of the old agreement for the 22 instructors back in March.

The hike in health care would mean teachers’ portion

of coverage would increase from 35 percent to 50 percent, resulting in an additional cost to each worker of \$3,000 per year. The increases center on family coverage while leaving individual coverage alone.

The union says the strike is ongoing until management submits a full contract proposal that can be voted on. Meanwhile, management has said it will bring certified instructors from its campuses in Los Angeles and Denver in order to resume classes. The college trains airplane pilots and technicians. Instruction for pilots is not affected.

## **Steelworkers announce deal with Goodyear**

The United Steelworkers (USW) announced a settlement with Goodyear Tire and Rubber late Saturday night, apparently avoiding a strike at five plants. The contract covers some 7,000 workers at facilities in Fayetteville, North Carolina; Akron, Ohio; Danville, Virginia; Gadsen, Alabama; and Topeka, Kansas.

The USW said a vote would be set in the next few weeks. If a settlement had not been reached, the result could have been a strike, the first in 11 years at the company. No details of the agreement have been released, which is said to extend 5 years.



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