

Goodyear Mexico fires workers who attempted to form independent union

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

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Around 50 workers at multinational tire firm Goodyear's San Luis Potosí, Mexico, factory were fired July 9. The workers accuse the company of carrying out retaliation against them because they had tried to form an independent union.

In 2015, Goodyear signed a "protection contract" with the notoriously corrupt Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). The union helped management maintain its low-wage regime and ensured a compliant workforce. Workers have complained that attempts to meet with their CTM "leaders" to discuss grievances failed and that they were left to the mercy of management.

On April 24, the workers went on strike against their wages and conditions, as well as to demand that they be allowed the right to form their own union. The strike ended the next day after workers' and management's representatives met with Labor Secretariat officials, and Goodyear signed an agreement not to retaliate against the striking workers. However, on April 26, a worker was fired and harassment of workers continued.

Following the firings, workers stopped production but were quickly confronted by CTM thugs who entered the plant to intimidate them. Meanwhile, rock- and stick-wielding thugs around the perimeter of the plant were joined by contingents of federal police. The next

day, Labor Secretary Manuel Lozano Nieto declared that the number of *inconformes* (dissatisfied workers) at the plant was small, production was not interrupted and that no strike had taken place.

Uruguayan retirees protest tiny pension increase

Several hundred Uruguayan retirees held a protest at the nation's Congress July 13 to demand a larger increase in their pensions than the one being debated in the legislative body's budget proposal. The protest was organized by the National Association of Retiree and Pensioner Associations (ONAJPU).

The baseline pension comes to about 11,000 pesos (US\$350) a month. The protesters consider the increase of 288 pesos, or US\$9, to be insufficient. Moreover, as ONAJPU Secretary General Daniel Baldassari told EFE reporters, "given the way it would be applied brings it down to around 188 pesos [US\$6], and therefore we demand an adjustment of the minimum pension and other concessions." Those other concessions include subsidies for public transit fares, expanded health care benefits, and higher pensions for those over 70.

Strike at Chilean cement plant

Workers at the Polpaico cement plant in the metropolitan Santiago area went on strike July 10 after negotiations between their union, Sindicato Polpaico

No. 2, failed, with the union rejecting management's last offer. The union represents 162 workers, about 15 percent of the overall workforce.

Media coverage of the walkout was scant on details, mostly based on Polpaico's press release, which announced that it has contingency plans in place.

Chilean clinic workers walk out over salary demand

After weeks of fruitless negotiations, workers at the Dávila Clinic in Recoleta, Santiago province, Chile, began an indefinite strike July 11. More than 700 health professionals are employed at the clinic. Emergency services will continue, as will services for hospitalized patients who cannot be transferred to another facility.

The main bone of contention is the salary raise. The union's negotiators are demanding a 7 percent hike—the same that was agreed to in 2016—but the administration has refused to budge from its offer of 4 percent.

The union accuses management of contracting replacement workers during the last few weeks of talks, which is illegal under Chilean labor law. The union has brought a complaint before the Labor Directorate.

Workers protest heat conditions, victimizations in Virginia factory

More than 100 workers at the Daikin Applied Americas manufacturing facility in Verona, Virginia, held a protest July 12 to oppose mandatory overtime, contract violations and being forced to work in temperatures over 100 degrees. United Electrical Radio and Machine Works of America (UE) Local 123, which represents about 340 production and maintenance workers, said workers are angry that a company that manufactures air conditioners forces them to work in a non-air-conditioned plant.

"It is miserable there in the summer," Mike Melton, a brazer, told the *Staunton News Leader*. "We are forced to wear long pants, safety shoes, shirts, heavy cut resistant sleeves and safety glasses. Sleeves should be

worn while brazing only, but we are made to wear them at all times."

Last year, a number of workers were hospitalized due to heat stress. The current protests aim to prevent a repetition of those events.

The UE also charges that management has been victimizing union members, including Local 123's vice president, Avery Bell. The union claims he was wrongfully fired for insubordination and has been out of work for two months.

Daikan Applied is the number-one manufacturer of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning technologies in North America and has operations in South America, Japan, China, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Ontario casino workers set to strike

Two-hundred twenty-five workers who are employed at Casino Ajax, east of Toronto, could be on strike next week if a new deal is not reached before then, after voting 99 percent in favor of strike action last week.

The contract between the owners, Great Canadian Gaming, and Unifor, which represents workers at Casino Ajax, will expire at midnight on July 23, as will the contracts of workers at four other Ontario casinos who are represented by the same union.

Unifor is seeking permission in a new contract for their members, who include, food service, guest service, maintenance and kitchen staff, to be able to transfer to a proposed new neighboring facility when it opens. They are also asking for an undisclosed wage increase for workers whose pay has only gone up 1.75 percent in eight years.



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