

Uruguay workers in one-day national strike

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

2 July 2019

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

### National supermarket strike in Chile

Employees of the Supermercados Lider supermarket chain went on a national strike on June 29, demanding better working conditions. Walmart purchased Lider in 2008. Interimpresa Lider, the trade union that represents the supermarket employees, indicated that a super-majority of workers (13,646) rejected the last Walmart offer; only 604 voted in favor.

A major issue in this strike is job security in the face of Walmart's plan to automate sales and deliveries. The strike is affecting about 100 supermarkets in Chile.

### Uruguay workers in one-day national strike

On June 24, Uruguayan workers carried out a national protest strike organized by the PIT-CNT trade union federation. The walkout took place a few days before national party elections to decide the presidential candidates for October, and was intended to "send a message" to potential candidates.

This South American nation is currently in recession, with rising unemployment. The Petrobras oil company recently compounded the crisis with announcements of more layoffs as part of its plans to shut down its chain of gasoline stations and natural gas distribution system; the unions are demanding that the government of Tavaré intervene in this crisis.

Another issue in the strike is a decision by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that puts a question mark on the nation's system of collective bargaining between workers and employers. The ILO decision followed complaints by Uruguayan business groups.

The strike was only partially observed in Montevideo, Uruguay's capital and largest city.

### Costa Rican workers protest antidemocratic legislation

On Monday, June 25, Costa Rican teachers marked the fifth day of their strike with a mass protest march in the capital city of San José. The march began at 9 a.m. local time, and the teachers rallied at the national legislature. They condemned draft anti-strike legislation being contemplated by the government. The proposed antidemocratic legislation would criminalize protests and strikes by public sector workers.

This demonstration is part of a series of rotating protests by different sectors of the Costa Rican labor movement.

The demonstrators also condemned the free-market economic policies of the current government of President Carlos Alvarado that institutionalize inequality.

The massive march stopped morning traffic in central San José.

### Ramp and cargo workers strike at Miami International Airport

Ramp and cargo workers who service Delta and American airlines struck Eulen America on June 27 to protest unbearable working conditions. Among workers' complaints are excessive heat on the tarmac, broken equipment, lack of vacation and sick days, and management retaliation.

The workers, who are not members of a union, consist largely of immigrants. "Many of us came from difficult countries, we came in search of the American dream," Esteban Barrios, 61, told the *Miami Herald*. "It's turned into a nightmare."

Workers also complain of irregular hours, with management moving workers around on whim.

The strike attracted a bevy of Democratic Party presidential hopefuls, who feigned sympathy for the workers, including Senator Cory Booker and New York Mayor Bill DeBlasio, who urged airport workers to unionize.

### **San Francisco veterinary workers stage one-hour walkout to protest stalled contract talks**

Veterinary workers at the VCA San Francisco Veterinary Specialists hospital in San Francisco walked off the job June 27 for an hour to protest the slow pace of negotiations and unfair labor practices. The facility employees, some 100 workers, oppose the company's freeze on wages, inadequate health care, short staffing, lack of training and, most recently, a management provocation whereby supervisors are being assigned to do bargaining unit work.

Benjamin Rendernick, a registered veterinary technician, told *SFWeekly* earlier this year, "We [are] not getting paid competitive wages at all. It's very common for most veterinary nurses [that they] can't stay in the field because they can't afford to continue doing this work, especially as we get older. I'm getting paid a poverty wage in the Bay Area."

The workers are represented by the West Coast Pet Care Workers, which is under the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

VCA is a chain of more than 750 veterinarian hospitals in the US and Canada. In 2017, Mars, mostly known for candy, purchased VCA for \$9.1 billion and

has affixed it to its Mars Petcare division, which is involved in the pet food industry. In 2018, Mars purchased the Linnaeus Group, establishing its dominance as a veterinary provider in the United Kingdom.

### **Veterans union on strike in Kingston**

Security guards, or Commissionaires, at military sites near Kingston, Ontario, went on strike last week after the local membership of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) voted to reject the latest offer from the Corps of Commissionaires.

Picket lines are up at the Canadian Forces Base Kingston, Royal Military College and nearby Fort Frontenac in Kingston, in a contract dispute concerning increased sick days and uniform allowance, among other issues. Most Commissionaires are older armed service veterans whose top wage is just over C\$18 an hour, and the current contract has no sick-leave provisions.

No negotiations are currently scheduled to settle the strike, which has drawn strong support from striking sheet metal workers in recent days.



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