

## NLRB rejects UAW appeal of Honeywell lockout

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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### NLRB rejects UAW appeal at Honeywell

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has withdrawn a complaint charging Honeywell International with illegally locking out 350 unionized workers in Indiana and New York state in 2016. The company locked out the workers after they rejected demands for concessions including the ability to make unilateral changes to health insurance coverage.

The announcement was made by newly appointed NLRB General Counsel Peter Robb, who gave no reason for the action. Robb, appointed by Trump, was the lead counsel for the Reagan administration in its vendetta against the air traffic controllers.

In response to the ruling the United Auto Workers, the union for Honeywell workers, issued a hypocritical statement condemning the action and calling for support for the Democrats. UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles declared, "This case shows why we must support candidates who will advance the interests of hard-working Americans and their families over big business."

The UAW had promoted reliance on the NLRB as an alternative to mobilizing support in the working class behind the Honeywell workers, who were forced to accept a rotten deal in February 2017 after nine months on lockout.

The claim that electing Democrats is a serious measure to defend the working class is false and cynical. In fact Trump's predecessor Obama took no action on behalf of the Honeywell workers. Indeed, Honeywell CEO David Cote was the most frequent corporate visitor to the Obama White House, according to official logs.

### Worker dies from injuries at Holland, Michigan auto supplier factory

Fifty-six-year-old Scott Tuesink died seven days after being injured on the job at Challenge Manufacturing in Holland, Michigan. The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration is investigating the incident.

According to reports Tuesink was struck by a steel coil and taken to Spectrum Health Butterworth Hospital for treatment.

The company is a supposed worker-owned operation under an employee stock ownership plan. It manufactures lightweight underbody assemblies for the auto industry and other metal-formed products. One worker, commenting on his experiences at the company, posted on the internet, "This is a poorly ran company that tries to pay people as little as possible the upper management the

'salary' workers do the least but get paid the most and treat the general production people poorly."

### Judge blocks lawsuit against Just Born workers

A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit by Just Born, the makers of Peeps candies, against workers who went on strike in 2016.

In his ruling the judge said the September 2016 strike by Just Born workers was legal. The workers struck against company plans to move all new hires out of the traditional pension plan into an inferior 401(k) setup.

The 400 workers returned to work in October 2016, however no contract agreement has yet been signed.

### State workers in Argentina protest firings

Thousands of state workers marched and demonstrated throughout Argentina January 4 to protest recent sackings in the state sector. The actions were called by the State Workers Association (ATE), Workers Central Association, Autonomous (CTA Autónoma) and were supported by other unions and social organizations.

In Buenos Aires, protesters marched to the Modernization Ministry to demand the reincorporation of over 1,200 state employees, particularly in administrative positions, who were dismissed in the last two weeks. ATE general secretary Hugo Godoy denounced the firings and accused the Macri administration of "continuing to dismantle the state sector" in order to "transfer them [state resources] to the hands of friendly [private] enterprises."

The Modernization Ministry claims that the firings, which often take the form of nonrenewal of contracts, are a response to a surplus of personnel; the unions reply that the opposite, shortages of workers and resultant overwork, is the case. The Macri administration had already sacked over 15,000 state employees before the current wave.

Protests took place in Tucumán, Rosario, Santa Fe, Chaco, Catamarca, Río Negro, Entre Ríos and various other cities.

### Argentine snack food plant workers strike over bonus

Workers at a PepsiCo bottling and snack food plant in Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires province began an indefinite strike beginning at midnight January 3 to demand full payment of their end-of-year bonus. The more than 700 employees would lose 21 percent of their bonus if the company goes through with its plan to institute a “remunerative” charge to it, cutting it from 11,456 pesos (US\$607) to 9052 pesos (US\$480).

PepsiCo is the world’s second-largest beverage and snack food producer, and includes Lay’s, Mountain Dew, Aquafina, Doritos, Gatorade and other snack foods and beverages under its umbrella. On June 20, at a plant in Florida, Buenos Aires province, 691 mostly women workers arrived to find a notice on the door announcing that the company was relocating 250 miles away to Mar del Plata. The company, which saw a 26.3 percent growth of sales in Argentina the year before, pled economic hardship.

In the face of the opposition of the company, the government and the Food Industry Workers Union—which struck a closure deal with PepsiCo behind members’ backs—workers occupied the plant, held demonstrations and called for a boycott of PepsiCo products. On June 28, despite its patently illegal character, the government ruled in favor of PepsiCo’s closure. The company offered jobs at Mar del Plata to only 155 of the Florida workers. On July 13, riot police used tear gas, rubber bullets and batons to dislodge the occupiers as their supporters in the plant’s working-class neighborhood banged pots and pans and denounced the police violence.

PepsiCo increased its use of contract labor and exploitation when it moved to Mar del Plata. Once again claiming economic hardship, management can count on the support of the government of Mauricio Macri, aka “the CEO president,” in the current conflict, and has little to fear from the union. One union delegate complained to reporters of PepsiCo’s refusal to talk: “They are using exhaustion. They are laughing at the situation.”

### **Chilean mineworkers approve contract, ending nearly four-week strike**

Workers at the state-owned Hernán Videla Lira smelter in northern Chile’s Atacama region voted January 6 to accept the contract proposed by the National Mining Enterprise (Enami). The union, Syndicate No. 2, had called the walkout on December 12 after collective contract talks failed to reach an agreement for the 118 workers.

The offer that was agreed upon included a one percent raise, an increase in vacation time, a “soft loan” of 1.5 million pesos (US\$2,476) and bonuses of 3 million pesos (US\$4,953).

Workers were told to resume work at midnight January 7.

### **Uruguayan transport unions call strikes to protest recent killings**

Two recent killings in the transport sector have spurred strike calls by several Uruguayan unions.

On January 5, the PIT-CNT confederation called for a general strike of interdepartmental omnibus drivers to commence at 2:00 pm on

January 9 to protest the assassination of Marcelo Silvera, interim president of the Cargo Transport and Related Branches Union (Sutkra) on the morning of January 3.

That day, a strike was in effect at a transport company in the northern department of Rivera. Silvera, who was walking with his wife and son, noticed a driver guarding a vehicle at the entrance. When Silvera chided him for not honoring the strike, the man pulled a gun and shot Silvera in the chest. The man was known for being antiunion, for brandishing his revolver at a union worker and for threatening to run over and kill striking workers.

A PIT-CNT statement lamented the murders as well as two femicides in the first four days of 2018 and the December 30 killing of a policeman. Secretary general Marcelo Abdala noted that “the case of the Sutkra director forms part of the stigmatization that is made of union activity,” and “For this reason, we strike on Tuesday the 9th and start a campaign in favor of life,” which will include mobilizations in February.

Also on the night of January 3, 46-year-old taxi driver Jorge Miranda Páez received a call for a ride in the Plácido Ellauri barrio of Montevideo. He was “intercepted and shot” to death, according to the Suatt taxi drivers union. Two minors have been arrested for the murder, which was part of a bungled robbery attempt. Suatt and the Unott national transport workers union called a 24-hour protest strike for January 5.

### **Alberta energy giant charged in workers deaths**

Oil and gas giant Nexen Energy is facing eight charges related to the deaths of two of its workers in 2016 at its Long Lake oil sands facility near Fort McMurray, Alberta.

The workers, Dave Williams, 30, and Drew Foster, 52 were killed in an explosion of compressed gas in January of 2016 and it has taken this long for the court to bring charges. Those include failure to ensure the health and safety of their workers and proper maintenance of equipment. While each count carries a potential penalty of up to C\$500,000 and two years in jail under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, it should be noted that there is less than one conviction for every 10 workplace deaths in Alberta.

The company, which is a subsidiary of China National Offshore Oil Corporation, had sought to place responsibility for the deaths on the workers themselves prior to the court findings last month, but would not make comment when the charges were announced.



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