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Deborah Tyroler

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Honduras: Banana Workers Strike

by Deborah Tyroler

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On June 28, over 10,000 workers on Chiquita Brands International Inc. banana plantations went on strike to demand wage hikes. Another 60,000 members of the labor federation that includes the banana workers planned a stepwise series of sympathy strikes, beginning with 2,000 Texaco refinery employees on June 29. The refinery supplies the entire country. Union officials said the strikers included banana cutters, railway workers and administrative personnel. They said the strike brought company operations to a halt. Bananas rank as the country's number one export. The Honduran Private Enterprise Council aligned itself with Chiquita. The Cincinnati-based company, formerly United Brands, owns the only railroad in Honduras. The transnational has enjoyed a near monopoly on the banana business in Honduras since 1912, and currently controls 60% of banana exports. A banana worker's average daily wage is about US\$15.32. The strikers are calling for a 60% wage hike. According to union leaders, the company has not provided a raise since 1985. Union spokespersons say the Chiquita management agreed to review wages after a 10-day strike in October, but has not yet complied. (Basic data from AP, 06/28/90)

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