

10-10-1990

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Recommended Citation

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El Salvador: Public Employees Organize Strikes, Work Stoppages

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, October 10, 1990

On Oct. 6, Marco Tulio Lima of the Inter-Union Coordinating Committee, which represents 20,000 public employees, told reporters that unionized workers planned demonstrations and strikes for Oct. 8 to protest low wages and poor working conditions, among other problems. Employees of the San Salvador, Santa Tecla and Soyapango municipalities, and of the Public Works Ministry commenced partial work stoppages last week. According to Lima, numerous requests for talks on workers' demands have been ignored by Public Works Minister Mauricio Stubig and mayors and municipal councils pertaining to the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). He said Stubig has reneged on agreements with ministry employees established a year ago. In addition to mass dismissals of national and municipal government employees, said Lima, officials have rejected demands by workers for a "ridiculous" \$19 per month wage hike. Meanwhile, he added, top administrators have received huge raises. Government officials have admonished public employees to "reflect" on positions and actions, in order to avoid being "deceived or manipulated into unconsciously serving as agents against the country's peace and development." Civil servants have been warned that Article 433 of the penal code provides for jail sentences of three months to two years for "public employees who stop working or walk off the job in groups of three or more." On Oct. 9, Christian Democrat Party leader Eduardo Colindres proposed "concertacion" for establishing a social pact to cope with the country's economic crisis, and thereby prevent "greater polarization of society." Colindres also called on the government to help reduce the impact of high oil prices by reducing fuel use by public administration and the military. (Basic data from AFP, 10/06/90; ACAN-EFE, 10/09/90)

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