



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Rio de Janeiro Teacher's Union wins increased wages, security, and professional autonomy, 2013

August

2013

to: October

2013

Country: Brazil

Location City/State/Province: *Rio de Janeiro*

Location Description: *The State of Rio de Janeiro and its capital city, Rio.*

Goals:

The State Union of Education Professionals of Rio de Janeiro demanded: a 19 percent readjustment in wages; expanded job security; more autonomy over classroom curricula; apportioning a third of school time to extracurricular activities; the direct election of school directors by teachers; and the decoupling of teacher's wage to student's performance. Municipal teachers in the City of Rio also demanded a wage increase.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 015. Group lobbying › SEPE-RJ teachers lobby Rio de Janeiro State Governor Sérgio Cabral and Deputy Mayor of Rio Adilson Pires.
- 038. Marches › SEPE-RJ marches to Rio's Mayor Eduardo Paes office and demands a meeting.
- 044. Mock funerals › SEPE-RJ staged a mock funeral for Governor Cabral, burying a faux coffin at the beach.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 106. Industry strike › SEPE-RJ announces a strike of Rio de Janeiro's state teachers.
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › State teachers briefly occupy Governor Cabral's residence after negotiations fail.

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 106. Industry strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › State teachers protested outside the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro.
- 106. Industry strike
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › State teacher occupied the steps of the the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

Methods in 4th segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Municipal teachers protest outside City Council.

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Supporters of the municipal teachers protest outside City Hall.
- 106. Industry strike › Municipal teachers join the SEPE-RJ strike.
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › Municipal teachers occupy the City Council chambers for six days.

Methods in 5th segment:

- 038. Marches › Between 10k and 50k protesters march to City Hall in support of the teacher's demands.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Supporters of the municipal teachers protest outside City Hall.
- 106. Industry strike
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › Municipal teachers continue occupation of City Hall.

Methods in 6th segment:

- 015. Group lobbying › SEPE-RJ meets with Judge Fux and representatives of Governor Cabral and Mayor Paes to forge an agreement.
- 038. Marches › Between 5k and 10k protesters march in solidarity with the teachers.
- 106. Industry strike

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- State Union of Education Professional of Rio de Janeiro; state teachers of Rio de Janeiro; municipal teachers of the City of Rio.

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

The State Union of Educational Professional of Rio de Janeiro.

External allies:

Black Bloc.

Involvement of social elites:

Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes, State Governor Sérgio Cabral; Justice Minister Luiz Fux.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- SEPE-RJ.

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- municipal teachers.

Groups in 5th Segment:

- Black Bloc.

Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

It is possible and likely that members of the Black Bloc attended protests earlier on in the strike, however they were not distinguishable as a group until they started taking action in the last two segments.

Segment Length: 13 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

The Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro, the City Council of Rio, Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes, State Governor Sérgio Cabral.

Campaigner violence:

The Black Bloc burned cars, attacked police, and engaged in property destruction during the major marches of 8 October 2013 and 15 October 2013.

Repressive Violence:

The police used tear gas, rubber bullets, and tasers to remove from the teachers occupying City Council and to disperse protesters during the two major marches in October. Some teachers and protesters were also arrested at these marches.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The SEPE-RJ did not wholly win any of its original demands, however it did win a wage increase and full nullification of penalties for striking workers. Furthermore, it won a new School Council and representation on a Working Group that will review the State's Education Plan.

In the summer of 2013, massive protests against the World Cup and public service cuts erupted across Brazil. Following this wave of protest, the State Union of Education Professional of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ), which represents both state teachers in Rio de Janeiro and municipal teachers in the city of Rio, launched a strike on 8 August 2013.

The Rio de Janeiro state government had proposed a Career, Position, and Salary Plan (PCCR) that offered job security to teachers who worked a minimum of 40 hours a week, which included only seven percent of all teaching staff. The PCCR also constrained teacher's autonomy in choosing what to teach in the classroom, forcing teachers with specialized degrees to conform to generalized curriculum and potentially degrading the quality of learning.

The SEPE-RJ announced their strike in response to the PCCR and demanded: a 19 percent readjustment in wages; expanded job security; more autonomy over classroom curricula; apportioning a third of school time to extracurricular activities; the direct election of a school's principal by the teachers; and the decoupling of teacher's wage to student's performance.

On 12 August 2013 teachers met with Rio de Janeiro State Governor Sérgio Cabral to negotiate. When the meeting failed to produce a resolution, teachers briefly occupied the governor's official residence, the Guanabara Palace.

The following day, 13 August 2013, the teachers met with Deputy Mayor of Rio, Adilson Pires, but again failed to reach an agreement. The state teachers said they had been promised a meeting with Rio's Mayor, Eduardo Paes, and the day after negotiations failed with Pires, 14 August 2013, the teachers led a mass march of 7,000 demonstrators to Paes' office. When SEPE-RJ leaders called for the demonstration to end late in the day, some protestors remained and said they would only leave when Mayor Paes granted a meeting.

In the following days Rio's City Hall released a statement threatening teachers with penalties if the strike continued. Municipal Secretary of Staff Pedro Carvalho also denounced the strike and stated that the city's teachers had already received a wage increase of 6.75%.

The SEPE-RJ said that City Hall could not impose penalties before a judge decided on the legality of the strike. The union, joined by over a thousand supporters, responded to City Hall's threat with a demonstration on 18 August 2013 and staged a mock funeral for State Governor Cabral by burying a faux coffin at the beach.

The next day, 19 August 2013, the penalties began: teachers would lose wages for every day of absence and teachers on probation would be fired.

Despite the new punishments, the SEPE-RJ decided to continue the strike the following day, 20 August 2013.

On 11 September 2013, teachers protested outside the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Protests continued the following day, 12 September 2013, and SEPE-RJ directed the teachers to occupy the steps of the Assembly until deputy governor Luiz Fernando Pezao agreed to a meeting. Four days later, on 16 September 2013, the teachers occupying the Assembly steps voted to continue the strike.

In mid-September the Rio City Council proposed a new pay package that would increase wages for first to fifth grade teachers to the level of sixth to eighth grade teachers.

On 20 September 2013, municipal teachers in the city of Rio joined the SEPE-RJ strike, demanding a higher wage increase than proposed in the pay package.

On 25 September 2013, the Municipal Secretariat of Education announced that striking teachers would have wages deducted from their holiday pay.

A thousand teachers protested outside City Council the next day, 26 September 2013, and when the Council session to vote on the pay package began, three hundred demonstrators entered the gallery, disrupted the session, and occupied the council chambers. Supporters of the teachers occupying City Council in Rio led series of demonstrations on 28 September 2013 – police used pepper spray and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters.

On 1 October 2013, a thousand teachers again stood outside City Council demanding that legislators refuse to vote on the (Career, Position, and Salary Plan) PCCR.

Police used tear gas and tasers to remove the protesters and end the teacher's occupation. The Council, with the endorsement of Mayor Eduardo Paes, passed the PCCR.

On 8 October 2013, between ten and fifty thousand people, including striking bankers and members of a Black Bloc, joined the

teacher's march to City Hall. The march was peaceful until members of the Black Bloc began to smash banks, burn vehicles, and throw firebombs at the police.

That night, a Supreme Court judge sided with the SEPE-RJ and announced that the penalties imposed on the striking teachers infringed on the worker's freedom of expression.

A week later, on 15 October 2013, between five and ten thousand people again joined the teacher's in protest. Leaders of the SEPE-RJ said they welcomed the presence of Black Bloc "provided they follow our guidelines" and asserted that the violence had come from police infiltrators or "more radicalized groups."

At the end of this protest, Justice Minister Luiz Fux of the Supreme Federal Court invited union leaders and government officials to a meeting on 22 October 2013.

At the end of the negotiation on 22 October 2013, Fux announced an agreement had been reached between SEPE-RJ and representatives of Mayor Paes and Governor Cabral. The agreement, conditional on the union stopping the strike, included: an 8% increase in the salary of teachers; the creation of a Working Group to review the workload and curriculum requirements for teachers; a removal of all penalties against striking workers and returning employment to all workers fired for striking; and the creation of a School Council to increase teacher's political representation.

Two days after Fux announced this resolution, on 24 October 2013, the SEPE-RJ voted to end the strike and accept the agreement: 1,085 voted in favor, 889 voted against. On 25 October 2013, the teachers returned to work.

Research Notes

Influences:

This strike followed a wave of huge protests in the summer of 2013.

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