

Workers Struggles: The Americas

8 January 2013

Argentine maritime workers strike for changes in contract

Maritime workers in the Argentine city of Mar Del Plata struck January 2 to demand the updating of their collective work agreement with ship owners. They work on fishing boats that do not process the catch on board, but keep it in boxes of ice or in refrigerated containers, since fishing trips can last up to 96 hours.

The workers are members of the United Maritime Workers Syndicate (SOMU). A SOMU communiqué stated that several meetings with the ship owners at the labor ministry had not yielded results and accused the ship owners of “absence and lack of interest in resolving the conflict.”

The SOMU is calling for the end of a 19 percent deduction taken from each worker’s pay as part of general expenses. In addition, the union wants a fixed price for so-called “varied” fish—i.e., species other than the more popular ones. The owners claim that there is no market for varied fish and that it is impossible to fix a number.

By noon of January 3, under pressure from the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, the SOMU lifted the strike and agreed to “a series of guidelines,” according to a *Terra* report. The parties will meet again in 60 days.

Argentine long-distance bus drivers strike

Argentina’s city of Mar Del Plata witnessed another strike on the evening of Friday, January 4. At 6:00 p.m., long-distance bus drivers, members of the UTA transportation workers’ union, paralyzed Mar Del Plata’s bus terminals by walking off the job. The strike,

which the UTA called “a suspension of service,” was precipitated by violations of work modalities that the union agreed to with the National Transport Regulation Commission, or CNRT, and the Labor Ministry.

The UTA’s main demand is that long-distance drivers be given a full 12 hours to rest between trips, since any fewer risks the security of passengers and drivers. In addition, a UTA spokesperson denounced “the business decision that, in a despotic form, imposed *monoconducción* [single driver in place of two] in the units, something we totally reject.”

The CNRT declared its “absolute repudiation” of the strike and claimed that it had applied administrative sanctions and fines against violating businesses.

Mexican educators’ unions may call for strikes in coming months

At least five strike actions are being considered by education workers’ unions in the Mexican state of Michoacan. The primary issues in the contemplated actions are salary adjustments, benefit increases and changes to their Collective Work Contract (CCT).

At the University of San Nicolas de Hidalgo in Michoacan, the University of Michoacan Employees Syndicate (SUEUM) has given authorities a January 15 deadline to respond to their demands for a 20 percent pay raise, a 3 percent increase in benefits and modifications to 21 clauses in the CCT.

Workers at the Michoacan National College of Professional Technical Education demand a salary revision and an augmentation of 50 percent to their benefits. February 13 is their deadline.

The Sitcobaem state college workers union is demanding a salary increase of 15 percent and from 40 to 65 percent in their benefits. The strike, barring an

agreement, is set for February 14.

The University of Michoacan Professors Syndicate (SPUM) demands a 15 percent salary raise, a 5 percent hike in benefits and the revision of 200 violations of the CCT, “particularly concerning the delay of pay and irregular contracting of professors,” as reported by *Proceso*. SPUM’s deadline is February 20.

The Sutcecytem scientific and technical studies workers’ union is calling for a strike March 19 if its demand for a 15 percent salary increase is not met.

California Teamsters strike on behalf of Florida workers

A strike by Teamsters in Miami, Florida, was expanded to Northern California last week. About 15 truck drivers at BlueLinx Trucking’s terminal in Miami began an unfair labor practice strike back on December 17 over what has been called a denial of access.

Details are limited, but apparently a dispute erupted between company officials and workers. According to the Teamsters, when one of their representatives came on company property, BlueLinx management not only limited the “union rep’s access, they actually removed him from the property.” Neither the union nor the company has revealed the nature of the conflict that triggered the event.

BlueLinx is the US’s largest building products wholesaler and operates in 48 states. The strike in Northern California was carried out by members of Teamsters Local 853, based in San Leandro.



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