

## Los Angeles and Long Beach port truckers strike over misclassification

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

20 June 2017

### Argentine judicial workers to hold two-day strike over raise, conditions

After their union rejected a government raise offer last week, members of the Buenos Aires Judicial Association (AJB) are set to strike on June 21 and 22. The provincial government had offered 20 percent, to be given in three installments during the year. The AJB demanded between 36 and 40 percent.

The government's proposed raise would leave thousands of judicial workers below the poverty line, according to the AJB. The government also rejected other demands: elimination of a third tier of auxiliary staff; restitution of 3 percent seniority pay; universalization of the position of office manager; change to permanent status for contracted, intern and outsourced cleaning workers.

### Argentine agroexport workers strike over pay

Workers at 21 import/export terminals in and near Rosario, Argentina's largest port, began an indefinite strike June 14 called by the CGT San Lorenzo confederation. The CGT accused the Chamber of the Vegetable Oil Industry of Argentina, CIARA, of refusing to meet to set wages.

About a dozen unions took part in the walkout, demanding that the Labor Ministry convoke negotiations under the 2011 Port Oleaginous Agroexport Agreement (COPA) to adjust wages. According to the 2016 accord, operators under COPA currently receive 19,000 pesos (US\$1,180) per month; CGT demands 27,000 pesos (US\$1,680).

CIARA claims that it has already agreed to bargain with the vegetable oil workers' unions, and workers who do not deal with vegetable oils have to meet with their individual businesses to negotiate.

### Chilean department store workers' strike in third week

Workers for the H & M department store chain in Chile continue their strike for improvements in pay, benefits and conditions. The workers walked out on May 30 after the retail giant rejected their collective contract proposal. In a June 15 statement, the workers' union says, "We know that our work is worth it, because thanks to us H & M has exorbitant profits." They are demanding a 193 percent wage rise, as opposed to H & M's offer of 17 percent above whatever is negotiated in the industry.

Workers have held lively demonstrations near H & M's Santiago store. In a June 13 YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkgSc2x2cgs>), the workers denounce harassment, shortages of personnel, excessively long workdays, job insecurity and the lack of labor rights. Their statement calls for a base salary adjustment, child care, bonuses for schooling and meals, a bonus for attendance, an end-of-year bonus and regularization of salaries.

### Uruguayan forensic scientists suspend strike over unfulfilled contract provisions

The Forensic Scientists Association of Uruguay (AMFU) began what was to be a 72-hour strike on June 15. The forensic scientists resolved to continue to perform autopsies and turn over bodies to families, but would not hand over the results in cases of fatal injuries from accidents or police incidents to judges or police.

The action was taken as a response to the Supreme Court of Justice's (SCJ's) recent reneging on a June 2016 agreement it had made with the Technical Forensic Institute regarding shifts. The coroners demand a labor regimen of 24-hour shifts one day a week, instead of on-call shifts that can take place at any hour and any day, in which they have to be present at the scene of a homicide or perform autopsies.

The doctors have also complained of shortages of personnel, resulting in delays of findings and of medical meetings.

On June 17, an AMFU assembly voted to suspend the strike, following a meeting with SCJ representatives in which the court agreed to put the 2016 agreement in effect.

## Los Angeles port truckers strike

A group of truck drivers and warehouse workers struck the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, California, Monday to protest their job status as independent contractors. The workers insist they are regular employees and should be recognized as such.

The job action involves about 100 workers at several companies—including California Cartage and XPO Logistics—that classify drivers as contract workers rather than full-time, hourly workers.

The workers say new clean-air rules adopted by the cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach will take a hit out of their paychecks. The new higher-tech, lower-emissions trucks cost as much as \$500,000, and the drivers, who own their own rigs, will have to pay.

Many companies force drivers to lease or buy their own equipment and pay expenses. They also say they are being cheated out of overtime and medical benefits. The strike is the 15th at the ports in the last four years.

## Teamsters end warehouse strike without resolution of wage discrimination

The Teamsters union ended a two-day strike June 14 at the Vistar Southern California distribution warehouse in Ontario, California. No announcement by the company or union has been made in the wake of the strike by 84 warehouse workers and drivers.

Teamsters Local 630 said the walkout was an unfair labor practice strike over the company's unilateral decision to give certain workers wage increases and not others without bargaining with the union. Workers voted in 2014 to accept Teamster representation but are still without a contract.

According to the Teamsters, management has pursued a divide-and-conquer strategy by placing women in the lowest-paying warehouse category, where they make between minimum wage and a mere \$13 an hour. Vistar delivers snack foods to Regal Cinemas, Edwards Theatres and AMC Theatres.

## Lucky Friday silver mine strike continues

Miners at the Lucky Friday silver mine in Mullan, Idaho, are continuing their three-month-long strike against the Hecla Mining Company. The strike began on March 13, after workers voted to lay down their tools the previous day. It is now a month longer than the last strike at the mine, which lasted from March 21 to 23 in 1981.

The United Steelworkers called the strike after nearly a year of failed negotiations between Local 5114 and the company. Hecla

was attempting to force through a proposal that would cut into workers' health care benefits, vacationing and bonus pay. Workers are also concerned that the new contract will reduce the safety regulations in the mine in exchange for profitability, especially for the newest shaft, which reaches almost two miles underground. The Lucky Friday mine produced more than 20 percent of the silver generated by Hecla in 2016.

## Beer driver strike ends in Taunton, Massachusetts

About 45 beer truck drivers for Quality Beverage in Taunton, Massachusetts, returned to work Monday after a three-week strike over a new contract. The Teamsters accepted a new five-year deal.

Health care was the major issue in the walkout. Workers wanted language that would prevent the company from arbitrarily raising premiums during the course of the contract. Workers say that under the previous five-year agreement, they ended up being saddled with an unexpected 8 percent increase in out-of-pocket payments. Workers also complained that under terms of the old agreement, they had received a paltry 1 percent annual wage increase.

## Ontario chimney workers strike

Seventy workers employed by Selkirk Canada in Nobel, Ontario, 100 miles north of Toronto, went on strike last week after working without a contract since late February.

Negotiators for the United Steelworkers union issued notice on June 14, initiating a strike by Selkirk workers two days later. The union says that it has reached an impasse over issues of wages, job classifications and the way that grievances are handled. Selkirk is a global producer of chimney and venting systems and is a subsidiary of Irish multinational Johnson Controls.



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