

Nationwide strike by educators set in Chile

Workers Struggles: The Americas

8 August 2017

Nationwide strike by educators set in Chile

Following an August 5 national assembly, Chile's College of Professors union announced a strike for August 17. The nationwide stoppage will protest the recent passage of a law called New Public Education (NEP), which union president Mario Aguilar said "does not resolve the great problems in Chilean education" and "maintains the logic of the market," further threatening public education.

The walkout will also protest delays in payments of wages and benefits owed by some municipalities. About 70 teachers from one community, San Fernando, began a march August 4 to Santiago to demand an audience with president Michelle Bachelet and the education minister.

Public education in Chile has never recovered from the "free market" policies instituted under the Pinochet dictatorship. University education is currently in Chile among the most expensive in the world. During her long tenure Bachelet has confronted a series of protests by students and educators demanding progressive educational reforms, struggles that have been betrayed and derailed by the trade union bureaucracy.

72-hour strike by Uruguayan anesthesiologists over pay dispute

The Surgical Anesthesiologists Syndicate (SAQ) in Uruguay called a three-day strike August 2-4 to demand that the State Health Services Administration (ASSE) comply with agreements reached in 2007 and ratified in 2008 and 2010. According to the SAQ, the ASSE had agreed to equalize pay for the 2,000 anesthesiologists, but failed to carry out the promise.

The ASSE claims that the pay adjustment has been carried out, and refused to respond to the walkout. The SAQ will meet to decide on further action.

The action follows a recent 24-hour general strike July 20 by public and private sector workers to demand that the government of President Tabare Vasquez increase public investment. It was the second nationwide protest strike called this year. The first one was held in June.

Colombian hospital workers strike for overdue pay

Workers for the University Hospital of Santander (HUS) in Colombia walked off the job August 5 following failed talks with Darsalud, their contract employer, over unpaid wages for the last three months. Striking workers protested in front of the hospital, intermittently blocking the entrance and declaring their resolve to continue their industrial action until they have been paid.

Over 1,200 HUS employees—doctors, nurses and administrative staff—are owed wages for May, June and July. Workers' reps have met both with HUS and Darsalud management in the past and obtained promises and partial payments, but say that they will not return to work until they receive full payment promptly. All but emergency services have been stopped.

Nicaraguan public transit workers strike over infrastructure improvement demands

Public transport drivers in the city of Boaco, Nicaragua stopped work on August 3 to press their demands for infrastructure improvements. The drivers struck after having submitted several fruitless petitions to the city council of Boaco, the capital city of the department of the same name. About 50 buses were grounded by the action.

Among the outstanding problems mentioned in the petitions were: the woeful condition of the roads, which

become virtually impassable in times of rain, and cause severe damage to the vehicles; the state of disrepair of the municipal market terminal, which is “saturated with commerce and deteriorated,” according to a *Nuevo Diario* report; unregulated taxi traffic, which, by driving outside the city, takes business away from the interurban buses.

The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI) set up a meeting with the Multiple Passenger and Cargo Cooperative of Boaco (Cootrabo) and the Mayorality of Boaco August 4. After five hours, the parties emerged to announce that Cootrabo had called off the strike after the city agreed to repair the roads, earmark the improvements of the terminals in next year’s budget and regulate the taxis through a permit issued by the MTI. The parties scheduled another meeting for August 8.

Seattle concrete drivers give strike authorization

Concrete truck drivers in the Seattle area at five sand and gravel firms are set to strike after giving unanimous thumbs down to management’s latest contract proposal. The contract for the 294 drivers and support workers expired July 31.

The workers are determined to gain a wage increase after enduring years of a pay freeze, putting them behind other construction workers. In a statement a management spokesman wrote, “Proposals put forth by the union continue to be unrealistic and not economically sustainable.”

The owners have pledged to continue operations in the event of a strike.

Downtown Seattle is in the midst of a construction boom fueled by the expansion of tech companies such as Apple, Google and Facebook. More than 1,000 are reportedly moving to the region each week. Some 30,000 residential units are currently under construction.

While the workers are in a potentially powerful position the Teamsters have not set a strike date and done nothing to mobilize other workers behind the cement truck drivers.

Workers strike Thunder Bay, Ontario car dealer

Thirty-six workers at Lakehead Motors in Thunder Bay, Ontario went on strike August 2 after the company refused to respond to a contract offer from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM).

Workers including technicians, auto body and parts workers among others, voted to strike after working without a contract since March of this year. Issues in dispute include wages and pensions, but the union says it is only asking for the same terms that were agreed on with four other dealerships in Thunder Bay where a new contract provides for a wage increase of 8 percent over three years. In addition, mechanics at the dealership are asked to work up to 16-hour days including training and travel time, for which they are not compensated.

The employer is having cars serviced elsewhere during the strike but the union has warned the public that this means their cars are not being repaired by certified technicians.

Toronto legal aid workers set to strike

Workers at West Toronto Community Legal Services (WTCLS) have voted to go on strike after the employer cut their monetary offer in half in retaliation for an appeal by their union to the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB).

The workers at WTCLS, which is funded by Legal Aid Ontario, provide legal and housing support to low-income and disabled people in the area. After rejecting the employer’s latest offer workers delivered a unanimous strike vote to their bargaining agent, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU). Union negotiators had launched an appeal to the OLRB to have a new paralegal position included in bargaining that the employer wanted excluded. The employer claims that the funds withdrawn from their final contract offer are needed to fight the challenge.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact