

12,000 professors and instructors strike Ontario colleges

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Salvadoran cultural workers strike for raise, conditions

On October 13, workers at several institutions of El Salvador's Culture Secretariat (SECULTURA) went on indefinite strike over a number of demands. The workers are members of two unions: the Cultural Secretariat Workers Syndicate (SITRASEC) and the Cultural Workers Syndicate (SICULTURA). The affected institutions included the National Center for the Arts, the Children's Park, several national theaters and administrative offices.

Among the workers' demands are the establishment of a system for promotions and pay scales, which supposedly had already been agreed on by the current secretary of culture, a pay increase that "consists of a voucher to realize purchases in a supermarket," and a budget increase for the secretariat.

Paraguayan university workers strike for 24 hours over contract and labor law violations

Workers at the Catholic University of Asuncion (UCA), Paraguay, held a one-day strike October 13 to protest violations of their contract as well as noncompliance with labor law. The workers' union claims violations of 11 articles in the contract since the current rector took over.

In addition, the workers denounced the lack of child care facilities. Under Paraguayan labor law, if there are more than 50 women at a workplace, the employer must provide child care facilities. UCA authorities claim that they have done so, but union leader Juan Abdala accused the UCA of lying "blatantly" and buying toys to misrepresent "a simple room for breastfeeding" with "an image that never existed."

The UCA immediately filed for, and obtained, a court order prohibiting the striking workers from coming closer than 100 meters (109 yards) to the UCA based on the claim that the administration feared "a new takeover" like the one that students had carried out earlier. According to a report at www.hoy.com.py, "a strong contingent of police [was] posted in the immediate vicinity of UCA to avoid the functionaries coming near."

Strike by Colombian pilots continues under increased pressure, defections

Pilots in the Colombian Civil Aviators Association (ACDAC) remain on the strike they began September 20 against Colombia's main airline, Avianca. The ACDAC called the walkout to demand salary parity with other pilots in their sector and improved working conditions.

Avianca reacted by submitting a petition to the Superior Tribunal to declare the strike illegal due to the "essentiality" of air travel, and obtained a return-to-work injunction. The ACDAC filed an appeal to the Supreme Court of Justice's labor division, thus putting the injunction on hold.

Since then, Avianca has brought in replacement pilots from other countries as strikebreakers. Business groups have voiced their "concern" over the impact of the stoppage on the economy and called for government intervention. Avianca claims that 77 of the nearly 700 pilots who walked out have returned to work. The ACDAC admits that there have been some defections, but puts the number at around 50. The striking pilots joined an October 12 march protesting the policies of the government of Juan Manuel Santos.

Chilean public workers unions back off from strike action over unfulfilled accord, call for protest instead

Two Chilean public workers' unions, Confusam and Anef, announced on October 11 that they had called for a renewal of strike action October 17 due to the "silence of the government" regarding an understanding reached in negotiations last August. In those talks, the parties had agreed to a 6 percent "nominal readjustment" to their pay.

Since then, the workers have not received the raise, nor has the government shown any willingness to continue negotiations, prompting the October 11 strike call. However, two days later, the unions changed the call for the National Warning Strike to a day of protests. The reason: the government agreed to meet with union reps on Friday, October 20.

In addition to the raise demand, the union reps will bring to the table the recovery of a bonus for terminating the conflict, vacation bonuses, end-of-year and national holiday bonuses, and travel allowances.

Argentine pilots strike over wage demand

Pilots for two airlines, Austral and state-owned Aerolineas Argentinas, struck airports in the Buenos Aires area early in the morning of October 13 over wage demands. Some 40 flights at the Aeroparque and Ezeiza airports were canceled or delayed. The striking pilots demanded that wage talks with the government be restarted. Their unions, LAPA and UALA, say that a 40 percent hike is needed to counteract the nation's inflation rate.

The airlines claimed that the unions had already signed agreements, that the strike was "unacceptable" and that it made "hostages" of customers. The Labor Ministry intervened, telling the pilots to return to work and accept "obligatory conciliation" talks. The unions sent the pilots back at 9:00 a.m. The unions and the ministry agreed to start negotiating on October 16.

Contract settlement in strike by Michigan landfill workers

A five-day strike by heavy equipment operators and mechanics at Advanced Disposal's Arbor Hills landfill in Salem Township, Michigan, ended October 13 with concessions by the union over pensions and wages. According to management, they agreed to a contract after the Operating Engineers Local 324 agreed to drop their demand that the company agree to contribute to the union's pension, which they allege isn't fully funded.

Advanced Proposal said the new three-year contract contains the inferior 401(k) pension and wage rates proposed by the company in negotiating sessions last month. Workers originally struck to obtain parity with wages and benefits at other landfills in the Detroit metro region. Currently, they pay \$150 a week for health care while making \$18 an hour.

Workers have been without a contract since they first unionized in 2016 with the Operating Engineers. Contract negotiations dragged on for a year until workers overwhelmingly rejected a company offer on October 7 and hit the picket lines two days later. Advanced Disposal is the fourth largest solid waste company in the United States and operates in 16 states as well as the Bahamas.

Quebec infrastructure workers take job action

Some 300 workers employed on public infrastructure projects in the province of Quebec are taking limited job action starting this week after working without a contract since March 2015.

The workers are employed in a range of jobs including engineers, architects, appraisers and managers on various civic projects. Their union, the Société Québécoise des Infrastructures (SQI), has initiated only limited strike action designed for minimum disruption with workers off the job from 5:31 p.m. to 7:59 a.m., which is outside of normal business hours.

Union leaders say they are fighting to bring salaries in line with other provinces where pay for similar work is up to C\$40,000 more annually.

Ontario college teachers strike

More than 12,000 professors and instructors at 24 colleges across Ontario went on strike Monday. Members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), the teachers voted in favor of strike action last month. Union negotiators say they are fighting to increase the number of full-time faculty to match the number on contract but the colleges say the proposal would cost over C\$250 million a year. College negotiators are asking for a vote on an offer for a four-year deal which they say contains a 7.75 percent wage increase.

No talks are currently scheduled, and the OPSEU says it is up to the College Employer Council to resume negotiations. A striking instructor at Fenshaww College in London, Ontario, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "The main issues are the use of part timers and job security.

"We do a lot of extra work at home. We don't have a lot of benefits either. We have to pay \$50 out of pocket every month for dental. Part-timers have nothing. They are in even worse shape."

Striking Toronto airport workers end strike

The 10-week old strike by over 700 baggage handlers at Toronto's Pearson International Airport came to an end Monday with workers voting by a 63 percent margin to accept a new deal. Strikers are set to report to work Wednesday.

It is not yet clear what, if any, improvements the deal contains over previous offers, though the Teamsters claimed it had minor improvements. Swissport workers have twice rejected deals brought to them by their union, which has isolated the strike since it began July 27.

Swissport, which has been using replacement workers since before the strike began, is the largest employer of its kind at Canada's busiest airport, providing baggage services to over 30 airlines. The main issues in dispute for a new contract include wages, benefits and scheduling.



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