24-hour strike by Argentine airline staff

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

24-hour strike by Argentine airline staff over salary demand

Workers for Argentina's two main airlines, Aerolineas Argentinas and Austral Lineas Aereas, held a 24-hour strike beginning early in the morning of October 31. Five unions, embracing pilots, technicians and other airport personnel, called the walkout to press their demand for a 26 percent raise to keep pace with inflation.

About 400 flights were affected by the walkout. Aerolineas Argentinas president Mario Dell'Aqua accused the unions of "putting the squeeze" on the airlines and said that, "a judicial measure is not out of the question." He claimed that the parties were "negotiating well and in the last week they've taken a totally irrational attitude."

Union spokespeople disputed Dell'Aqua's claims of salaries of between 250,000 and 300,000 pesos (US$14,000 and $17,000) in the aeronautical sector, saying that take-home pay at Aerolineas is more in the neighborhood of 45,000-46,000 pesos (US$2,500-$2,600).

Doctors in Dominican Republic stage another protest strike

Doctors in the Dominican Medical College (CMD) held a 48-hour work stoppage in all public health system hospitals and clinics November 2-3, continuing to press their demand that the government comply with provisions of an agreement signed last November. This was the fifth consecutive week that the CMD has held strikes lasting 24 or 48 hours, and it accuses the health minister of refusing to engage in dialogue.

In the accord, the Health Ministry agreed to raise salaries 25 percent and grant access to pensions to 1,800 people, among other provisions. CMD claims that many doctors have yet to receive the raises and that the ministry has not fulfilled all the provisions that it agreed to.

The Health Ministry claims that it has complied with all requirements. Regarding dialogue, it is biding its time until after the CMD's presidential election, to be held on November 8.

Trinidadian telecom workers protest store closings

On October 31, workers for Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) protested the company's decision to close nine of its retail stores. The protest, which was held at noon at offices in San Fernando and Port of Spain, was called by the Communications Workers Union (CWU).

TSTT is "a large telephone and Internet service provider…which is jointly owned by the government of Trinidad and Tobago and Cable and Wireless" (Wikipedia). On October 24, it announced plans to close nine out of ten retail stores, citing an analysis that found that more than 70 percent of transactions in its bmobile stores were bill-related.

According to the Trinidad and Tabago Guardian, TSTT will carry out a "transformation" that "includes the use of TSTT's enhanced online portal, interconnected kiosks and an expanded bill payment network including the banks, Sure Pay and dealers." The company declared that no employees will be retrenched, a claim that workers find hard to believe.

TSTT employs many workers through employment agencies, so they are not considered permanent staff. Moreover, TSTT has told the CWU that any permanent worker who refuses to be "redeployed" or cannot fit into a redeployed position will be sacked. The company has refused to discuss the decision with the union.

Thousands march to protest housing shortage in Brazil

Thousands of homeless Brazilians and sympathizers marched October 31 to protest the shortage of affordable housing. The march, organized by the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), began at an abandoned 15-acre lot—now a tent city—in Sao Bernardo do Campo, an industrial municipality, and ended at the regional government building 12 miles away in Sao Paulo. MTST claimed that at least 25,000 joined the protest.

Brazil has an official unemployment rate of 12.4 percent—about 13 million—but millions more scrape by on precarious part-time and short-term employment. As rents continue to climb, even those who have full-time work have seen their earnings plummet, with employers taking advantage of their desperation to drive down wages. The number of makeshift homeless encampments at Sao Bernardo do Campo has grown from 500 in September to over 7,500, according to a recent Al Jazeera report.

There are homeless encampments in other areas surrounding Sao Paulo, as well as throughout Brazil. The MTST has held protests to pressure the national government to pump money back into the "Minha Casa, Minha Vida" (My House, My Life) federal housing

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program, which has been drastically cut back as the recession has deepened. It is appealing to the local government to expropriate the Sao Bernardo land, owned by the MZM construction firm, which abandoned it over 40 years ago.

Homeowners in the area have petitioned the local government to evict the squatters. Following a local judge's ruling in the petitioners' favor, the government announced that it would begin "negotiating" the evictions on December 11. Previous evictions of occupations have involved military police and scores of injuries.

California manufacturing workers strike over unsafe working conditions

Some 80 striking workers at Henkel Aerospace Industrial in Pittsburgh, California, including four on disability from work-site accidents, were cut off from their health insurance November 1 by management. Members of Machinists Local 1584 began their strike October 16 after a rash of grievances, dangerous working conditions and the company's refusal to dismiss a racist supervisor.

Workers first organized after a 2013 accident in which 26-year-old David Eleidjian, a veteran of two tours of duty in Iraq, was sucked into a chemical mixing machine and crushed. Both legs were amputated and he ultimately died from his injuries.

The director of the Department of Industrial Relations claimed that the incident was preventable and that the company was aware of the danger the mixer posed before the accident. Striker Austin Woodyard was on the scene when Eleidjian died and said he was part of an employee safety group implemented after the accident, "but I quit it because nothing was happening. There's no accountability."

The company has been fined some $200,000 for six violations by the California Occupations Safety and Health Administration. Strikers also report that a considerable number of employees signed a petition sent to management alleging racially-prejudiced behavior from a supervisor who continues to work at the plant.

Henkel Aerospace Industrial is a subsidiary of German-based multinational company that employees over 50,000 people globally.

Oakland, California city workers hold one-day protest strike

Some 2,000 Oakland, California city workers held a one-day strike November 2 to protest five months of negotiations that have failed to resolve wage and safety issues. The protest strike by the Service Employees International Union Local 1021 was called on the same day that Mayor Libby Schaaf gave her State of the City Address.

The union charges that the city has kept staffing at 2008 levels and is operating with more than half of its workforce as part-time.

Nassau County, New York school bus drivers resume strike

School Bus driver in four Nassau County, New York school districts are back on strike over management refusal to meet the contract demands of 300 drivers, monitors and mechanics. Thousands of students are affected by the walkout.

The main issues in the dispute are wages and management contribution to workers' 401k retirement savings accounts. Drivers are asking for a guarantee to be paid for five days of work. Transport Workers Union 252 say drivers are paid below current market rates.

Bauman Bus Company says it has made concessions in the negotiations. The next meeting is scheduled for November 10.

City workers strike in Quebec

750 outside municipal workers in the City of Laval, west of Montreal, Quebec went on limited strike for the last two weekends after voting overwhelmingly in favor earlier in October and after working without a contract since January of 2016.

Members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the strikers include road workers, sewage and snow removal and workers at arenas and grounds across the city. Union negotiators say they are only trying to get deals in line with other contracts recently signed by the City, which they say keeps adding new concession demands.

There have been at least 13 meetings with a mediator and those talks are scheduled to continue. In the first phase of job action, which is being called an overtime strike, numerous arenas were closed along with other public venues.

Quebec daycare workers resume job action

The series of one-day strikes that began last week by daycare workers across the province of Quebec will continue this week with strikes held on Tuesday and Wednesday.

This is the latest part of a six-day strike workers mandated to their union, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) in October. The main areas in dispute include retirement age and pensions. The union says that while negotiations with the provincial government have picked up in recent days they are prepared to use the remaining three days in their mandate.

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