

Canadian Pacific Railway workers set to strike

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Maquila workers in Mexico protest attacks on militants

On May 23, workers at the Rintex company in Jiutepec, in the south-central state of Morelos, rallied at the plant to condemn the firing of workers seeking to form the Independent Workers Coalition of Rintex Workers to fight the daily violation of workers' rights by this giant textile firm.

Picketing workers at the plant pointed out that as soon as they began organizing their workers coalition the company initiated a campaign of harassment and humiliations, leading to the sacking, on Monday, May 21, of the militant workers, allegedly for lack of work. Security personnel immediately escorted the workers out of the plant, preventing them from communicating with anybody inside the plant.

At the Wednesday rally, the demonstrators insisted on the immediate rehiring of the six sacked workers, an end to the victimization of Rintex workers, and the right to form an independent union at Rintex.

The Rintex plant, with 800 workers, manufactures T-shirts for the export market.

Argentine utility workers protest

On Thursday, May 24, over 2,000 utility workers marched in Córdoba, Argentina's second largest city, denouncing the increases in utility rates and attacks on

wages and working conditions. The marchers, members of the Luz y Fuerza (Light and Power) union, also called for a rejection of the impending agreement between the administration of President Mauricio Macri and the International Monetary Fund, which many fear will bring in higher unemployment and an attack on real wages.

The trigger for the march was the decision by the Provincial Electric Energy Company to end benefits included in the current labor contract. The company's actions are now legitimized by recent "labor reform" legislation.

Furthermore, in a media campaign, company executives blame increases in electricity rates on the costly benefits that workers enjoy at the company.

Steel workers in Brazil mobilize and strike against corporate attacks

On Thursday last week, the workers at the Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (National Steel Company, CSN) in Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro State, rallied, mobilized and walked off their jobs. The workers are fighting for a six-hour workday and pay distribution under the Profit Sharing Program (Participação nos Resultados, PPR).

The steelworkers demand what is due them in a lump sum while management is proposing those workers that earn less than R\$3.2 thousand (about US\$860) receive a bonus in two payments, each corresponding to half what is owed to them. Those workers that earn more would receive two bonuses, each corresponding to 90 percent of their wages.

CSN management is also attempting to impose a longer 12-hour workday, taking advantage of so-called "flexibilities" legislated into the new labor reform.

Chicago-region beverage delivery drivers strike over wages and company intimidation

More than 150 Teamsters delivery drivers went on strike May 22 against the American Bottling Company facilities in Northlake and Harvey, Illinois, over wages and unfair labor practices. American Bottling Company, which is a division of the Dr. Pepper Snapple Group, pays members of Teamsters Local 727 some two dollars less than drivers at Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

The Teamsters have filed a number of unfair labor practices charges, including company retaliation against workers involved in union activity and denying requests for union representation during disciplinary meetings. The most recent charge is over the company's hiring of armed security guards "to patrol and intimidate our members."

In a press release, the union has warned of a "long fight." But its only concrete action was to call on its supporters to boycott beverages made and distributed by American Bottling and Dr. Pepper Snapple. Northlake is considered one of Dr. Pepper Snapple's largest facilities, employing some 800 workers.

Canadian Pacific Railway workers set to strike

Over 3,000 train operators and signal workers at Canadian Pacific Railways (CP) will go on strike this week as announced by their unions, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

Union negotiators say they were forced to call a strike due to CP's refusal to improve its latest contract offer. One outstanding issue for workers are the schedules that drive workers to exhaustion. Numerous operators that are dependent on rail lines owned by CP, such as Via Rail and Ontario transit company Metrolinx, have said they will face serious disruptions from a strike while CP has implemented its own strike contingency plan.

Workers in both unions had voted nearly unanimously against the latest company offer and in favor of strike action in recent days. This comes in the wake of a vote on a contract offer, as required by the federal government, that concluded mediated talks last month.

B.C. miners strike

Two hundred workers at Mount Polley Mining Corporation in central British Columbia went on strike last week after a three-hour lockout that management claimed was intended to speed up stalled negotiations.

The strikers are members of the United Steelworkers union (USW) and have been without a contract since the end of last year. This job action comes in the wake of layoffs announced in January that will ultimately eliminate at least 78 jobs.

Mount Polley is an open-pit copper mine owned by Imperial Metals based in Vancouver. The union has appealed to the company to resume negotiations, but that offer was rejected.

Ontario municipal strike grows

The two-week old strike by 230 outside workers in the city of Cornwall in eastern Ontario was joined last week by another 150 inside workers in the same union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The strike now includes bylaw officers, building inspectors, childcare and water service workers, among others, who are fighting a range of concessions being demanded by the city. The strike has meant a reduction of services in a number of departments, including ambulance service, with the city asking patients to take taxis or make their own way to hospital except in the most urgent cases.



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