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Workers Struggles: the Americas

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Doctors, nurses, dentists, administrative and social workers in public hospitals, clinics and health centers in the Mexican state of Sinaloa struck recently over the government's failure to contribute its portion to their savings fund. The state Health Secretariat (SSA) was supposed to have deposited the money at the beginning of August.

With the school year beginning, many need to draw from the fund to pay for supplies for their children, and the shortfall has affected them dramatically.

Over 4,000 workers have been affected by the state's nondelivery of the money. In the city of Culiacán, workers carried out their duties under protest beginning August 16, displaying placards and signs denouncing the shortfall. In Guasave, where over 200 have been impacted, personnel began a strike on August 17.

The governor claimed that the funds were deposited, but union officials said that less than half of the funds have shown in their accounts.

Bolivian soccer players strike over months-overdue pay

Players in Bolivia's Club Deportivo San José soccer team, which competes in Bolivia's Primera División, voted to go on strike August 15 over unpaid wages. The team, which previously went on strike during the preseason in April, went back to work after agreeing to give management a deadline of August 10, which passed without the wages being paid. This is the fourth time players for the club have gone on strike over unpaid wages since 2014.

Team captain Didí Torres told reporters that "this situation is unsustainable" adding that while they do not rule out playing an upcoming game, they would not practice beforehand.

Uruguayan urban transport workers to hold 24-hour national strike over route changes

Urban transport workers in Montevideo, Uruguay, the country's

capital and largest city, are on strike today. The 24-hour walkout by the members of the Asociación Sindical de Cooperativistas y Obreros del Transporte (Ascot) will coincide with a national strike called by the PIT-CNT confederation.

Ascot head Marcelo Vidal announced that the strike was called due to changes in the routes in the city, which provoked a diminution of fare sales, causing concerns over possible salary and personnel cuts.

Argentine professors, students, researchers protest cuts in science funding, frozen salaries, lack of research grants

Professors, students, researchers and others held a vigil in front of the Congressional Palace in Buenos Aires against the drastic cuts to the education budget. "The salary of university educators is frozen, Conicet [National Scientific and Technical Research Council] research grants are below the poverty line and subsidies for research are halted," Juan Carlos Robloredda, the dean of the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), explained to reporters.

In addition, UBA's Hall 2 of Exact Sciences has been deprived of gas for more than 130 days. "the UBA Rectory as well as Metrogas and the government have washed their hands," a student told *La Nación*. He added that the vigil organizers would hold an audience of Conicet directors and opposition lawmakers "to denounce the adjustment in science."

The cuts are in line with the Macri administration's deal with the International Monetary Fund's "adjustment" program, which will increase the attacks against workers in all sectors as well as students.

Teachers federation in Argentina rejects unilateral imposition of insufficient raise, calls four-day strike

Argentina's National University Docents Confederation (CONADU) delegates rejected a unilaterally imposed 5.8 percent salary raise on August 15. A CONADU statement declared the increase insufficient and asserted that it "consolidates the loss of purchasing power and does not exceed the 15 percent ceiling." Inflation is projected to rise above 20 percent this year. CONADU

issued a call for a four-day national strike from August 21 to 24.

The statement described the raise as “a maneuver of the government, which is trying to divert attention and undermine adherence to the strike.”

Another strike demand is an increase in the education budget, which has been slashed and is scheduled to be hammered even more to conform to the austerity demands of the IMF.

California healthcare workers locked out following one-day strike

Following a one-day strike, 560 members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) at Providence Tarzana Medical Center outside of Los Angeles, California were locked out for an additional four days. Management claims the lockout is due to the fact they had to contract for a minimum of five days to obtain replacement workers.

The unfair labor practices strike was called by the union due to hospital officials withholding information during the course of nine months of negotiations. The nursing assistants, medical technicians and respiratory therapists are demanding increased wages and an end to the cancellation of shifts.

To cut costs, management has frequently sent workers home in the middle of their shifts, leaving remaining workers overburdened. Workers facing multiple cancellations of shift work have resorted to using personal time off to compensate for lost pay in order to pay rent and other expenses.

The NUHW is asking for wage raises of between 3 and 5 percent. Hospital officials are countering with 1.5 and 2 percent. No tentative agreement resulted from the one-day strike.

Tentative agreement following one-day strike by Atlanta sanitation workers

Teamsters Local 728 in Atlanta, Georgia and negotiators for the solid waste company Republic Services reached a tentative agreement on August 17, one week after a one-day strike by 100 sanitation workers. Few details are available of the proposed contract, which workers will vote on August 25.

The two sides negotiated since May of this year without any progress until the strike began. The company has not indicated that it will take any action against the 100 workers who walked off the job.

Republic Services is the second largest solid waste disposal and recycling company in the US, operating in 39 states and Puerto Rico. The company amassed \$3.83 billion in gross profits in 2017, up from \$3.62 billion the previous year.

Contract ratified after company ordered workers out of plant

Workers at Special Metals Corporation in Huntington, West Virginia ratified a new three-year agreement August 13 by a 332-93 margin. Company negotiators and the United Steelworkers Local 40

officials declined to make available any details about the agreement.

On August 17, the company ordered its 500 workers out of the facility, expecting a strike when the old contract expired at midnight. But the union and company continued to negotiate, with the two sides reportedly divided over insurance issues and a company demand to facilitate the use of contractors.

Special Metals is owned by Oregon-based Fortune 500 company Precision Castparts Corporation. In 2016, Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway investment firm acquired Precision Castparts for \$32 billion.

Nova Scotia postal workers strike

Around 20 drivers for Nor-Pel, a contractor for Canada Post across Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, went on strike for two days last week in their bid to get a first-contract with the company, but returned to work on Friday when the company agreed to weekend talks.

The drivers are members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) who have been trying to negotiate a contract since 2016. According to the union, Canada Post is “contract flipping”, changing from one company to another. The strikers do the same work as Canada Post employees but are paid far less and receive no benefits.

The company says it is still waiting for a ruling from the Canadian Industrial Relations Board on whether the dispute falls under federal or provincial jurisdiction, but says it is not planning to bring in replacement workers.

Quebec tax workers stage weekend walkout

The weekend shift at the provincial tax offices of the Agence du revenu du Québec went on strike during the first weekend in August. The workforce has been without a contract since 2015.

The workers, who include accountants, analysts and financial managers, are organized under the Syndicat des professionnels du gouvernement du Québec (SPGQ). Low salaries are at the heart of the dispute. According to the union, workers at Revenu Québec earn 30 to 40 percent less than their counterparts at the federal agency, Revenue Canada, doing the same work.

The weekend strikers represented only a small fraction of the 4,600 workers employed by the agency. The union called the strike “a first warning shot” and claimed that it has not ruled out taking further action in the coming weeks.



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