

Work stoppages by Argentine air cabin crew members lead to flight cancellations

Workers Struggles: The Americas

6 November 2018

Work stoppages by Argentine air cabin crew members lead to flight cancellations

Cabin crew members at three Argentine airlines—Flybondi, Andes Líneas Aéreas and Aerolíneas Argentinas—held surprise assemblies, i.e. work stoppages, in the early morning of November 2. By the time the workers resumed their posts at 10:30 AM, around 30 flights at the Jorge Newbery terminal outside of Buenos Aires had been canceled.

A statement by the Argentine Cabin Crewmembers Association denounced “the downsizing of several months, when they reduced fleets and destinations; in addition delays in salaries for workers grew because of a trigger clause not being counted, and for this reason we are demanding the immediate opening of parity talks.”

Mexican education secretariat workers strike for unpaid salaries

Administrative staff for the Education Secretariat of Tabasco (Setab) began a strike and occupation of the department’s offices in Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico on October 30. The workers’ primary demand is the payment of wages for September and October, totaling more than 4.5 million pesos (US\$225,000).

Another demand by the striking workers is a guarantee that they will be paid their wages in November and December, as well as the aguinaldo or end-of-year bonus.

Teachers have also held protests, strikes and street blockages in Villahermosa in the last two months over the issue. These previous efforts did not lead to an offer of dialogue or other response from either Setab or the Planning and Finances Secretariat. A delegate of the Education Workers Syndicate told reporters that “up until now, we haven’t had any dialogue with the authorities, so we have no other option than to remain in place.”

Bahamian nurses protest change to schedules, meager raise

The Princess Margaret Hospital in Nassau, Bahamas was the scene of a protest by scores of nurses on October 29. The nurses, members of the Bahamas Nurses Union (BNU), objected to the announcement by the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) of changes in the shift pattern. BNU officials claim that the new system, which would include back-to-back day and night shifts, will lead to burnout and mistakes that could negatively affect the treatment of patients.

The PHA claims that the shift had been agreed to in a 2014 “legally enforceable agreement,” but the BNU counters that it was made “null and void” by a 2015 industrial agreement. BNU president Amancha Williams added that the changes would exacerbate the nurse shortage crisis already plaguing the health care system.

The nurses also objected to the PHA’s planned \$1.75 per hour shift premium raise (Bahamian and US currencies have the same value), which they consider insulting in view of the rising cost of living due to inflation and the enactment in July of a hike in the value added tax from 7.5 to 12 percent.

An October 30 meeting between the BNU and PHA produced no resolution. The nurses and supporters marched the next day from the post office to the Ministry of Health, where they held a rally.

Uruguayan medical workers call limited strikes over stalled negotiations

The Medical Syndicate of Uruguay (SMU) resolved last week to strike for two days, November 7 and 8, to demand progress in negotiations with the State Health Services Administration (ASSE). The SMU accuses the ASSE of “emptying professionals” from the public sector and is demanding equivalence between the salaries of the public and private sectors.

The Surgical Anesthetic Syndicate (SAQ), meanwhile, announced on November 4 that its members planned to strike from November 5 to 7. The SAQ stated that the strike was called “in search of an immediate solution to the problem of the participation of this syndicate in the different fields of collective negotiation.” The SAQ wants “the creation of a specific subgroup for this collective in the framework of the Salary Council,” according to a

Montevideo.com report.

Emergency and urgent care services, as well as oncological surgeries and attention to high-risk situations at obstetric clinics will be exempt from strike action in both cases.

Short strike by Argentine bus drivers protests nonpayment of raise

Drivers for the 18 de Mayo bus company in General Roca, a city in Argentina's Río Negro province, stopped work from 9 PM November 2 until 6 AM the next day. The limited strike was decided upon following a nearly three-hour assembly of members of the Automotive Tramway Union (UTA) over 18 de Mayo's failure to pay a 5.7 percent raise agreed to months before.

As agreed to in negotiations between representatives for UTA and bus companies in Río Negro held months before, the raise was scheduled to kick in at the beginning of September. It represented about 4,000 pesos (US\$113) for each driver. 18 de Mayo was the only bus company that did not comply with the agreement.

The monthly wage for a bus driver is around 20,000 pesos, or US\$564.

Montana talc mill lockout ends with concessions

The lockout of 35 workers at the Three Forks talc milling plant ended October 30 after members of International Boilermakers Union Local D239 voted to accept a new offer from Imerys Talc America. The French-owned company locked workers out on August 3 after workers for the third time voted down contracts that would have cut overtime pay, slashed seniority, frozen pensions and ended health insurance for new retirees.

The new agreement has been touted as a victory by the AFL-CIO and Democrats who walked picket lines claiming to support workers. While Imerys preserved double-time pay for workers, it is only activated after 14 hours of overtime, whereas it previously kicked in after 8 hours.

The pension plan has been frozen and health benefits for retirees will only be extended through 2019. Health care benefits for new retirees are extended only through 2019. Seniority will be retained for job advancement, but only as a factor alongside of other considerations such as skills and ability. This will offer a loophole for management to discriminate.

Imerys purchased the Three Forks talc plant in 2010 from Brazil's Rio Tinto conglomerate. That year, the Boilermakers' union signed an eight-year contract with the Brazilian company. Imerys initiated the lockout days after posting an 11.9 percent increase in revenues to \$2.6 billion for the first half of 2018. Imerys has 16,000 employees worldwide working in operations that extract minerals in 50 different countries.

Saskatchewan Co-op workers strike

Members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) employed by the Saskatoon Co-op went on strike last week at over as dozen outlets and gas bars across the city.

The approximately 900 unionized workers have been without a contract since the end of 2016 and UFCW negotiators say they are fighting against employer demands that wages for new hires be set at \$4 an hour below that of other workers. Union negotiators rejected an offer made after the strike announcement last week that reportedly included a small improvement in wages up to two percent annually.

In the first strike at the Saskatoon Co-op since 1983, many Co-op outlets have been operating with reduced hours but most have been kept open with the use of management and non-union staff.

Yukon social workers on strike

Workers employed by Many Rivers Counseling & Support Services in centers across the Yukon Territory are on strike after working without a contract for over a year.

Members of the Yukon Employees' Union, which is affiliated with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the 18 counselors and administrative staff voted overwhelmingly in favor of strike action last week. According to the union, a main issue in their strike is the demand by Many Rivers for a six-year contract in place of the normal two- or three-year agreements which would see wages falling behind the rate of inflation. In addition, the union is fighting against management concession demands relating to wages, overtime pay and benefits.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact