Striking Salta, Argentina teachers mobilize against their union

Workers Struggles: The Americas

19 March 2019

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

Striking Salta, Argentina teachers mobilize against their union

Thousands of striking teachers mobilized last week in the streets of Salta in northwestern Argentina in repudiation of their union "representatives". The teachers demand that the education authorities negotiate directly with them.

The strike began nearly two weeks ago, after an assembly of teachers rejected a wage deal between the government and their union, negotiated behind their backs. The agreement would have raised teachers wages by 35 percent; with government bonds of 5,000 pesos in two payments.

Instead, the strikers demand a first payment of a thirty percent raise in one payment plus two payments of 19 percent.

Bolivia: San Cristobal miners demand 12 years of unpaid Sundays

On March 12, 800 miners, members of the Bolivian Federation of Miners (FSTMB), rallied in La Paz, Bolivia, demanding that the Transnational Sumitomo Corporation pay up on 12 years of unpaid Sunday work. Sumitomo owns the San Cristobal mine. The protesters condemned Cesar Navarro, the mining minister, for being an accomplice with Sumitomo.

Bolivian labor law mandates that workers that labor on Sundays be paid triple their hourly wage. San Cristobal and Sumitomo have refused to obey since 2007. Government officials are calling for arbitration and asking miners to refrain from further protests.

University workers protest in Mexico City

On March 15, hundreds of striking university workers marched in Mexico City accompanied by teachers and other supporters. The issue is wages. The government has not responded to their demands. The public universities on strike are the Metropolitan Autonomous University, the Chapingo Autonomous University, the Postgraduate College, and the Mexico City Autonomous University. The marchers rallied at Mexico City's central and historic Three Cultures Square.

São Paulo, Brazil Metro workers slow-down strike

Contract workers at the São Paulo Metrô, employed by the Lideranza subcontractor as ticket sellers, are on a slowdown strike against punitive wage discounts. The workers also demand better working conditions. The workers have been on a slow-down all last week. In addition to paying hunger wages (906 reais, or 237 US dollars), the company gives itself the right to illegally discount from wages any alleged and unproven discrepancy in passenger receipts.

The workers also point out that ticket booths are unsafe, in disrepair and very easy to break into and complained about the fact that they are represented by a company union.

Demonstrations in Buenos Aires against the high cost of food

Last Thursday supporters of an alliance of three neighborhood groups (the San Cayetano triumvirate) blocked the Pueyrredón Bridge that connects the industrial zone of Avellaneda with downtown Buenos Aires. Other groups rallied at the Obelisk in central Buenos Aires, and then marched and rallied again at the Department of Social Economics. Other groups rallied at supermarkets and set up soup-kitchens.

At the Pueyrredón Bridge the protesters defied police and blocked all lanes of traffic, except for one. A similar incident, with identical demands, resulted in 2002 after the police

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assassination of Maximiliano Kosteki and Darío Santillán, two unemployed youth.

The demonstrators demand an increase in welfare measures to make up for the extraordinary increase in food prices in Buenos Aires. February's prices are 40 percent higher than last February's; food prices alone are up 60 percent.

Office workers at SEIU national headquarters threaten to strike over job security

Unionized staff workers at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in Washington, DC, voted by a 92 percent margin to strike over job security and other issues. The Office of Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 2, which represents administrative staff, researchers, communications specialists and pension analysts, accused the SEIU of being hypocritical and practicing "union busting."

David Hoskins, one of the SEIU workers, told CSBN, "The truth is that what they preach publicly ... is very different from what they do internally." The SEIU staff has shrunk from 171 workers in 2005 to 84 and workers charge the SEIU with outsourcing work to non-union contractors. Workers cite the public relations firm BerlinRosen, hired by the SEIU, as an instigator in the campaign.

During negotiations SEIU has been seeking to remove layoff protection for new hires. Under the old agreement, a worker with five or more years seniority who is slated to have his position eliminated had the right to transfer to another position. "They want to make unionized workers less secure and give them less job security," said Hoskins.

California hotel workers carry out one-day strike over arrest of union organizer

Workers at the Hyatt Andaz hotel in West Hollywood, California carried out a one-day strike March 12 to protest the arrest of a union representative who was legally meeting with union members in the cafeteria. Nerexda Soto, a union organizer for Unite Here, was discussing the on-going contract negotiations with workers on March 6 when four deputies from the Los Angeles sheriff's department entered the cafeteria and handcuffed her.

The hotel's recently installed general manager has agreed to comply with labor law and allow Unite Here Local 11 to have access to the hotel's employees. Unite Here is currently negotiating with a number of hotel chains over wages, pensions, healthcare, safety and protection for immigrant workers.

Foreign service workers in bargaining impasse

Workers employed in Canada's diplomatic corps have filed for arbitration after nine months of negotiations failed to produce a new agreement with the federal government.

The 1,600 members of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) have been working without a contract since last July and union negotiators cite a range of outstanding issues including health and safety and delayed payments arising from the disastrous Phoenix pay system. The union also says that the government has been intransigent in negotiations and government negotiators say they will abide by any decision made by the Labour Relations board.

In 2013 PAFSO went on strike for nearly 6 months after working without a contract for nearly two years.

Nova Scotia college strike ends with no deal

After less than two weeks on the picket line, teachers and librarians at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NASCAD) in Halifax, Nova Scotia are returning to work after their union agreed to allow a mediator to settle outstanding issues.

More than 90 full-time and part-time staff, members of the Faculty Association of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (FUNSCAD), have been working without a contract since June of last year. The strike was called over wage and workload issues, which the union says they have not been able to improve in past contracts due to the financial difficulties of the school.

The school remained open during the strike with the use of non-union teaching staff, but many students refused to cross the picket line.

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