

Two-day strike by Peruvian doctors

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

23 July 2019

### **Peruvian doctors strike for two days over budget, salary demands**

The Peruvian Medical Federation called a 48-hour strike for July 17 and 18 to demand that the government comply with provisions it had signed with its representatives. In addition to the strike, the medical workers held a sit-in protest at the Congress building the first day.

Among the demands were the increase in 2020 of the budget for health and medical care to 0.5 percent of the gross national product, an end to shortages of supplies, equipment and medicines, and salary increases for doctors. Federation president Danilo Salazar claimed that the government had already signed on to these changes but has not come through.

The Federation vowed to hold an assembly for a vote for an indefinite national strike if there are no “concrete responses” to their demands.

### **Retired Trinidadian oil workers protest nonpayment of pensions**

A group of retirees from the now-defunct state-owned Petrotrin petroleum company held a demonstration at the gate of the Pointe-a-Pierre administration building. The retirees complain that there is money missing from their pensions. They have not received their July payment, and it is doubtful if they will receive one for August.

Petrotrin was dissolved on December 1 last year and broken up after years of financial woes blamed on poor management, corruption and the fall in oil prices. More

than 5,500 permanent and temporary workers lost their jobs as a result. The various functions of the firm—exploration, development, refining, marketing, debt settlement, asset sales and others—were divvied up among four firms. One protesting worker told *Newsday* that around 1,500 retirees have been shorted on retroactive pension payments.

The senior labour relations officer for the Oil Workers Trade Union (OWTU), Gregory Marchan, went to the site that day with a group of retirees, but most of them were prevented from entering the gate after Marchan entered. Following this latest meeting with management—OWTU and Petrotrin reps had already met in May and June—Marchan told the retirees that they would have to “get things boiling hot” to remedy the situation but did not go into details.

### **Bolivian doctors hold 48-hour strike over budget for health care program**

Doctors in Bolivia’s Medical College federation broke off dialogue with the Health Minister last week and called a 48-hour strike beginning July 18. The doctors claim that the minister, Gabriela Montaña, had tried to threaten them by bringing Bolivian Workers Central (COB) representatives into the talks, a move that they characterized as “intransigent and abusive.”

The conflict involves the passage earlier this year of legislation creating what the government purports will be universal health care. The doctors have claimed that the budget for the Unique Health System (SUS) would be insufficient and had to be increased, considering the lack of infrastructure and Human Resources, and inadequate biosecurity and supply shortages. They have

held a number of protests and strikes since then. As before, emergency services were not struck.

### **County judge halts strike by Ohio caseworkers who serve children**

A Montgomery County judge in Dayton, Ohio issued an injunction July 19 within hours of the beginning of a strike by 272 workers in the Children Services Division. Charging that their work stoppage would cause “irreparable harm,” the court requested a 72-hour halt to the strike.

The strike by members of the Professional Guild of Ohio (PGO) came after county management rejected a fact finder’s recommendation that sided with the union’s request for a 6 percent wage increase over three years compared to the 3 percent wage increase stipulated by the county. The PGO’s wage demands match an earlier settlement reached by the county with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Some 75 percent of the striking workers are caseworkers who attend to some 2,000 children in the county’s welfare system and handle over 1,500 cases with 50 court hearings under schedule. The balance of the bargaining unit is composed of clerical, IT and other staff employees.

### **Union announces deal for Quebec provincial parks employees**

A potential general walkout by workers at Quebec provincial parks (SEPAQ) was called off over the weekend as union officials announced a tentative deal. Some three hundred parks workers had already walked out, but these workers have now been sent back to their jobs by union officials.

No details of the settlement have been released. Workers were reportedly looking for a single wage structure for all employees and a cost of living increase. Management had announced plans to keep parks open

during the busy summer tourist season at reduced capacity.

Most of the park workers are seasonal and make between CAN\$13 to CAN\$14 per hour. A full strike would have involved 1,500 workers at 23 parks across the province.



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