

UFCW announces deal ahead of strike deadline in Southern California grocery dispute

Workers Struggles: the Americas

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

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The United Food and Commercial Workers said it had reached a deal Sunday night with major Southern California grocery chains scuttling plans for a strike that could have involved tens of thousands of workers. Voting will take place this week.

The UFCW says it will recommend a yes vote on a tentative agreement covering Ralphs, Vons, Pavilions, and Albertsons. No details of the settlement have been released. Management praised the deal. A Ralphs spokesman declared, "We are pleased to have worked with the union to secure increased wages, continued premium health care coverage, and pension. Our associates are the heart of our company and this agreement is a reflection of their contributions."

The contract talks covered 46,000 workers at 50 stores in Central and Southern California. The previous contract expired in March but the UFCW did not take a strike vote until June. The settlement came in advance of a September 9 strike deadline. Main issues revolved about wages, health care benefits and the classification of part time workers. Management had indicated plans to continue operating with the use of strikebreakers in the case of a walkout.

Supermarket workers complain of poverty level wages, with 60 percent reporting they need a second job in order to survive.

Buenos Aires subway train operators in four-hour strike

On Friday, September 6, the Association of Subway and Premetro workers carried out a four-hour job action in response to the collapse of negotiations with the Metrovías transit management over the operation of ticket booths at recently inaugurated stations in downtown Buenos Aires. The subway union declared that Metrovías is violating a 2013 agreement that each ticket booth be operated by a minimum of three workers. Another issue is worker safety. In the past few weeks several workers have faced physical attacks.

Argentine Oleaginous industry workers' strike

On Wednesday, September 4, 22,000 cooking oil industry workers, members of the Federation of the Oleaginous Industry Workers, launched a national strike. At issue is wages. After failing to respond to demands for a July wage reopeners for two months, as agreed upon last December, the workers rejected a unilateral raise of 15,000 pesos (US \$250) beginning this month. A second oleaginous industry union, with 15,000 members, did accept the proposal.

Daniel Yofra, of the Oleaginous Industry Workers Union pointed out that, with the acceleration of the Argentine economic crisis after the August primaries, salaries are losing their value every day, while the industry, which sells in dollars and pays peso-denominated wages, is raking in obscene profits.

Ontario school union threatens job actions

Strike at Venvidrio glass company

Workers at Venvidrio glass are on strike since August 28. Since Monday the strikers have rallied at the company headquarters. The workers are demanding a wage increase and the firing of the entire company management, which they blame for driving the company into the ground. Venvidrio, formerly Guardian Glass, was nationalized by the Venezuelan Government in 2016 and is operated by the Maduro administration. Government officials and Venvidrio executives refuse to negotiate with the strikers.

Company officials have threatened to fire the strikers. When three strikers were threatened with firing early in the week, workers rallied in their defense, daring company officials to fire all of them. The order to fire the workers came from Coronel José Jaspe, the company's head of security, notorious for victimizing Venvidrio employees. Ironically, Venvidrio advertises itself as a "socialist company."

Venvidrio workers are appealing to all Venezuelan workers to support their struggle.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees, representing 55,000 school workers in Ontario, will be in a legal strike position as of September 23 and are blaming the provincial Conservative government for a looming confrontation arising from a round of deep cuts to education funding in Ontario.

Union leaders have said that job action by support workers in the coming weeks could include one-day strikes, work-to-rule or a full strike if negotiations scheduled for next week fail to produce an agreement. Workers affected in this contract dispute include custodians, administrators and educational assistants in all four provincial school board systems whose last contract expired at the end of August.

Recent cuts by Doug Ford's government have meant the elimination of programs such as special needs, increased class sizes and cuts to maintenance, all of which have meant the elimination of jobs and provoked popular opposition. The union nevertheless says that they are hopeful that a settlement can be reached to avoid any disruptions going into the new school year.

At the same time, three other education unions are simultaneously in contract talks with the Ontario Tories and could soon be in a legal strike position.

Veracruz, Mexico teachers initiate slow-downs

On Tuesday, September 3, Veracruz teachers marched and rallied in the city of Veracruz to protest the beginning of the school year. The protest was followed by slow-downs by 90,000 teachers across the Mexican State of Veracruz. The teachers, members of the National Education Workers Union (SNTE), are protesting attacks on their wages and working conditions, including back wages owed to them.

Veracruz teachers are not alone. Similar conditions prevail in other Mexican States. In Guerrero a teachers' protest was brutally repressed on August 27. Strikes are also on the agenda in the States of Chiapas and Michoacán.



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