

BC municipal workers authorize strike

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

1 October 2019

### One-day strikes by Argentine sugar cane processing workers

Sugar cane processing workers in the La Mendiata Rio Grande Mill in Argentina's northeastern Jujuy Province carried out one-day strikes on September 23 and 24. The workers are demanding a 30 percent raise, against management's 23.5 percent offer. In separate agreements, workers in nearby Ledesma Mill Workers and in Tucumán Province agreed to raises of 23.5 percent and 40 percent respectively. The workers plan to strike again this Thursday and the following Monday.

Workers are also demanding an end to the use of contract workers and part timers to perform maintenance tasks at the mills.

### Argentine paper plant occupied to protest closure

Kimberly-Clark workers in Buenos Aires Province are occupying the paper plant in protest over the company's announcement last Thursday that the plant was closing.

On Friday, Kimberly Clark workers and their supporters blocked a major highway in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area that links this city with the provincial capital of La Plata.

### Brazilian metal workers strike

Metal workers employed by the Gerday Longo Steel company in São José dos Campos went on strike last Friday. Jobs and wages are the main issue; the

steelworkers rejected a company offer that falls short of inflation and that eliminates food vouchers essential for the well-being of many steelworker households. In addition, Gerday Longo is proceeding with plans to replace permanent and full-time workers with contract and part-time workers.

### Aerospace workers' strike against Embraer in Brazil called off

A strike by Embraer workers was suspended by the union one day after it began September 24 in the face of police repression.

Workers employed by the Embraer airplane manufacturer walked off their jobs to protest a measly wage offer of 3.28 percent for the contract year that begins at the end of this month. The workers are demanding 6.37 percent. White-collar workers joined the strikers.

Striking workers returned to the job September 25 after police began intimidating them. The union said it recommended the return to work to avoid "violence."

United States

### Protest at Florida airport calls attention to victimized workers

The Service Employees International Union announced a protest September 27 at Fort Lauderdale-Miami International Airport over the firing of three workers. One worker, Sandra Adams, who cleaned planes for Delta Airlines, led worker protests at the airport while

homeless, compelled to sleep at the airport between shifts, and making only \$8.50 an hour.

Two other workers, Ahmet Elsheikh and Dafose Milord, were also fired. Both took part in protests that not only agitated over wages, but unsafe working conditions. After the protests, Eulen America—the contractor that employs the workers—began rotating schedules of targeted workers like Elsheikh and Milord, making it impossible for them to fulfill shift requirements.

### **Workers strike Sherwin Williams Andover, Kansas facility**

Several score workers at the Sherwin Williams Andover, Kansas plant walked out over the weekend after rejecting a contract proposal brought back by International Association of Machinists Local 708. Contract negotiations had been in progress since late August. An IAM spokesman said safety and benefits were key outstanding issues.

The rejected contract, which management called its “last best and final offer” was for four years and contained minimal wage increases, and increased the probationary period for new hires from 60 to 90 days.

### **Montgomery County, Ohio officials reject union proposal as strike by caseworkers resumes**

Negotiators for Montgomery County Children Services rejected a proposal September 25 by the union representing 270 welfare caseworkers and other county staff employees. The county has been rigidly opposed to any wage settlement that will lock in future wage increases of any substance.

The Professional Guild of Ohio (PGO) returned to the picket line September 23 for the first time since July when a county judge issued a 60-day injunction claiming the strike would cause “irreparable harm.” The union’s proposal called for a 4 percent across the board wage increase, along with the addition of a 3 percent increase to wage scales.

The county’s most recent offer was for a one-time wage increase of 5 percent with lump sum payments to certain

workers. This offer came after initial wage hike proposals of 2 percent and 4 percent in earlier negotiations.

The ability of the county, with the aid of the courts, to stonewall PGO workers is bound up with the isolation of the strike from wider struggles of state, county and municipal workers along with teachers and autoworkers.

### **BC municipal workers authorize strike**

Municipal workers voted 96 percent in favor of strike action against the District of Coldstream, British Columbia on Wednesday, September 25. The vote was taken after bargaining talks that began in May collapsed in August when the municipality attempted to impose a wage structure that was less than the average for other cities in the province, and lower than that for nearby communities. The district is also calling for a longer-term contract that will only exacerbate the effect of inadequate wage levels that are leaving the employees, already burdened by increasing housing and living costs, even further behind.

No sooner had the vote to strike been taken than the union in which the workers are organized, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 626, applied to the BC Labour Relations Board for mediation in the hope of preventing a walkout that would fuel a growing offensive by BC workers. A 14-week-old strike of 3,000 forestry workers against Western Forest Products is continuing as well as the strike by over a thousand hospitality workers against major hotels in Vancouver.



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