

Ontario teachers hold one-day strike; Mexican truckers announce January strike; Three-day walkout of Honolulu airport food service workers

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

28 December 2019

### Latin America

#### Mexico: truckers' union announces strike over fees, schedules

Mexico's CONATRAM cargo transport confederation announced December 18 that it has called for a "macrostrike" of drivers in the state of Jalisco. The planned date of the stoppage is January 15.

CONATRAM called for the strike over two issues: recent laws imposing a fee and setting hours for delivery and pickup of cargo. A CONATRAM delegate declared that the measures "can put at risk all industry in the state." He added, "We are a federal public service, regulated by the federation, our authorization is of the federation, but the most important thing is that constitutional rights are being violated."

CONATRAM, which has 60,000 members, also expressed fears that the laws would be replicated in other states. CONATRAM president Elías Dip invited another transport federation, CANACAR, as well as other truckers' unions, to participate in the strike, which he said would be "not so much marches and demonstrations but a stoppage of labor in which we're not going to carry products to or from Jalisco."

#### Argentina: Dairy workers' union ends two-day strike, signs wage agreement

Shortly before midnight December 19, and after prolonged negotiations, the Dairy Industry Workers Association of Argentina (Atilra) and Dairy Industry Center (CIL) announced that they had come to an agreement, thus ending a 48-hour strike called for December 18 and 19. Atilra had already held a 24-hour walkout on December 7 over a CIL pay offer that members considered insufficient.

According to the agreement, the CIL will pay a 16 percent "nonremunerative" (not based on work done) raise in December for the annual bonus (*aguinaldo*). In January, the remunerative increase will be 16.5 percent with a later hike of 32.5 percent. In addition, the industry will pay nonremunerative bonuses of 5,000 pesos (US\$84) in January and February, and 4,000 pesos (US\$67) in March and April.

The parties also agreed to establish a "policy and technical board" to organize the sector and set norms across the dairy industry.

#### Fired rail line workers in Argentina block rails to demand rehiring

Former employees of the Roca rail line in Avellaneda, a port city in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, carried out protest actions at two of its main stations December 18. The protests, which lasted from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., affected nine routes and about 300,000 peak-hour commuters.

The protesters were described as *autoconvocados*, or self-organized, by the media, since they did not rely on union support or organization. They demanded the

rehiring of some 250 ex-workers, both full-time and outsourced, not only from the Roca line, but also from three other lines “fired in an arbitrary fashion.”

The fired workers had held protests on December 5 and 12 and were told by the Transportation Ministry that they could attend a meeting on December 26.

## **United States**

### **Airport food service workers stage three-day strike**

Over 500 food service workers at Honolulu airport in Hawaii ended their three-day protest strike December 21 launched to demand higher wages and more affordable health care. The strike, by members of Unite Here Local 5, comprise a variety of workers who labor in restaurants, bars and other concessions at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport and are employed by HMSHost.

Workers have been frustrated with the slow pace of talks and there is no indication that the current strike has brought the company to heel. The old agreement expired in December 2018 and workers voted by 99 percent in November to strike HMSHost. Workers average a mere \$12 an hour, with starting wages at \$10.10. Honolulu is one of the most expensive cities to live in the United States.

One worker revealed he received only a single 50-cent raise since he was hired three years ago. Health care coverage amounts to only \$115 a month for a family and \$75 a month for an individual.

HMSHost is the world’s largest food service company providing food and beverage services to travelers. The company has annual sales of \$3.5 billion a year.

## **Canada**

### **Thousands of Ontario teachers hold third one-day strike against government austerity**

Thousands of high school teachers at 10 school boards across Ontario held their third one-day strike last Wednesday against the austerity measures imposed by the right-wing populist provincial Conservative government. The teachers are protesting moves to increase class sizes, cap wage and benefit increases to 1 percent per year for

three years, gut local funding for schools and eliminate up to 10,000 jobs.

Following a province-wide one-day strike by over 50,000 high school teachers earlier this month, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) has sought to dissipate the widespread anger among its members against the Ontario government cuts by restricting subsequent protests to regional work stoppages.

Last week’s strikes impacted school boards in Waterloo Region, York Region, Thunder Bay and Kent, among others. OSSTF teachers and elementary school teachers represented by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario are also continuing a work-to-rule campaign across the province.

A striking teacher at Sir John A. Macdonald High School in Waterloo told the WSWS, “My little girl needs a future. Cuts to education hurt kids.”

In Kitchener, a striking teacher told the WSWS, “One thing I’d sure say is how pissed off we all are about how [Education Minister] Stephen Lecce is going on TV every day and spouting a bunch of lies about how negotiations are hung up over the wages issue. Every time he opens his mouth that’s all he says. A total lie.

“Money is only a small part of it. The main issue is fighting all these cuts in the quality of education—things like unworkable class sizes, and E-Learning. We’re striking to keep a high quality of education in our schools. That’s why the students support us. That’s why the parents support us. And that’s why Lecce is trying to change the channel, making out that this is all about wages and greedy teachers.”

Asked whether she thought that the partial, rolling one-day strikes will be enough to win the dispute, the teacher said, “It doesn’t look like it. We need to apply more pressure. There are the elementary school teachers in the same boat as us. And the Catholic school teachers. They need to come out on strike soon too. We all have to step this thing up, maybe rotating strikes every day in one region or another. We might need to all come out on a full strike.”



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