Molson Coors strike continues in Toronto

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Latin America

Argentine oilseed workers threaten new strike if company reneges on promises

Oilseed workers union SOEA has threatened to carry out new protest actions at key Rosario, Argentina crushing and export facilities Buyatti if management fail to fulfill key demands made by a group of sacked workers.

The threat followed the shutdown by Buyatti of its crushing facilities in Puerto San Martin, dismissing 84 workers.

Earlier this month, SOEA had carried out blockades at grain export facilities across the San Lorenzo hub. The actions were suspended after talks with the Argentine labour ministry began.

At that time, the union had agreed it would suspend protest actions after it agreed to schedule talks for March 29. At the meeting SOEA and government representatives agreed to continue with additional talks after a ruling by the national labour ministry that confirmed that management would be expected to pay full compensation to the workers it sacked.

However, in that meeting SOEA representatives and government officials agreed to continue additional talks in the week ahead, bolstered by a ruling from the national labor ministry that confirmed the crusher was expected to pay full compensation to dismissed workers.

Chile copper mine up for sale

The Chilean private equity fund Minería Activa is putting its Pampa Camarones mine in Arica y Parinacota region in the country's far north up for sale.

According to a report in daily *Diario Financiero*, the company decided to sell the open pit copper mine earlier this year. There are at least 10 firms that are interested.

The sale is expected to be completed by the end of the year and a price has not been disclosed.

Pampa Camarones was acquired by Minería Activa in 2016 after its previous owners declared it bankrupt. The mine was reactivated in 2019 after Japan's Mitsu agreed to provide $10 billion in working capital.

Chile supplies about one third of the global supply of copper. Mines have been declared an essential industry during the pandemic and workers forced to remain on the job, where they have suffered massive rates of infection.

United States

San Francisco janitors strike, demanding contract improvements and COVID-19 protections

Some 700 San Francisco janitors carried out a three-day strike starting March 24 demanding COVID-19 protections and increased living standards. The workers are employed by building maintenance services such as AMB Industries and Able Services, and clean 600 buildings, including those of tech giants Google, Facebook and Salesforce.

Service Employees International Union Local 87 has been in negotiations with the San Francisco Maintenance

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Contractors Association, an employer group, for eight months and have been unable to achieve workers' demands for increased wages, sick pay, better health insurance and equipment to guard against the coronavirus, including better ventilation systems the run during their night shifts.

"We're still picking up trash without masks or hand sanitizer," Ramiro Rodriguez told Bay City News. "The companies give us 1-2 masks every 2-3 months and expect us to ration it out. And while I'm struggling to cover my expenses because my hours have been cut, employers don't want to cover increased costs to our health insurance! It's unacceptable, especially in the middle of a pandemic."

Workers are calling attention to the fact that 26 janitors have died from COVID-19 and are demanding the rehiring of 3,000 janitors who were laid off at the onset of the pandemic.

Steelworkers strike Atchison, Kansas foundry over seniority rights

The 131 Steelworkers at the Bradken Foundry in Atchison, Kansas, launched an unfair labor practices strike March 22 after two months of failed bargaining. United Steelworkers Local 6943 provided few details. President Gregg Welch said the strike was "about protecting our seniority rights and keeping our senior people working."

Ken Bean, vice president of operations with Bradken, has sent letters to workers asking them to cross picket lines by either resigning from the union or becoming dues paying members only. The company has indicated it has experienced financial difficulties in the recent period.

Bradken, which is owned by ANI, an Australian-based company with additional operations in China, the United States, England and New Zealand, produces mining equipment, cast iron and steel. In June of 2020, Bradken paid the US Justice Department $10.9 million in a deferred prosecution agreement for providing subpar metal for the construction of US Navy submarines.

Canada

Lockout at Molson Coors in Toronto continues

About 300 production, packaging and warehouse workers at Molson Coors' giant Toronto brewery are now in the fifth week of a lockout. The strikers are members of the Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers, a subsidiary of the National Union of Public and General Employees.

The company has insisted that most workers be moved from a defined benefit pension program to an inferior defined contribution plan based on the vagaries of the stock market. The move is part of a steady drive to greatly increase the number of workers labouring for inferior second-tier wages and benefits. In addition, management seeks to put an end to the eight-hour day and traditional overtime payment provisions.

The company has continued production without its unionized workforce, mobilizing managerial staff. As advertisements for a scab workforce continue to appear in various outlets, it is expected that strikebreakers are also part of production plans should the lockout continue.

The move by the company to impose a new and brutal shift schedule system similar to the much-hated Alternate Work Schedules spreading out in North American and European workplaces has drawn the particular ire of workers. Destroying the hard-fought for principles of the 40-hour work week, the eight-hour day and overtime pay for all work beyond those parameters, management proposes the imposition of a 12-hour work day and 60-hour work week followed by 12-hour shifts for four days the next week and then for 3 days the next week. Those working on weekends can be declined overtime pay.

Just over the past year in the auto plants, Unifor also agreed to the introduction of an alternative work schedule in their new three-year Canadian contracts. This grants the plant's management authority to organize shifts as they see fit, and eliminates overtime pay for most work on weekends or beyond the traditional 8-hour workday.

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