

## Quebec public-sector daycare workers strike

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

**Brazilian homeless workers occupy stock exchange**

On September 24, the Movement of Homeless Workers (MTST) took over the São Paulo stock exchange to protest unemployment, inflation and hunger. Demonstrators denounced inequality in Brazil, contrasting the record increases in share prices with the crisis confronting the working class. According to MTST leader Debora Pereira, one hundred million Brazilians are going hungry, while more than 6.6 billion US dollars are invested daily in the stock exchange.

Some of the signs displayed at the occupation read: “your shares finance our misery” and “Brazil has 42 new billionaires and 19 million are starving.”

**Thousands across Mexico commemorate the Ayotzinapa 43**

Angry workers, students and rural students joined the parents of the 43 rural teaching students disappeared seven years ago on September 26 and 27, 2014 to protest in Mexico City and other cities across the country. The demonstrators demand that the government of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador carry out a thorough investigation of the murders, including investigating leaders of the armed forces.

**Panama port truckers protest strike**

On Thursday, September 23, truckers, members of Panama’s Container Truck Drivers Union (CNTCC), went on strike in the cities of Panama, Colon, Chiriqui and Paso Canoas (on the Panama-Costa Rica border) to protest abuse by maritime companies such as Maersk and MSC. No deadline was declared for the strike, which involves road blockages by the drivers.

At issue is the attempt by the shipping monopolies to take over the entire logistic supply chain.

The truckers have called on all workers to join them in a national general strike.

**Educators to strike on October 1 in Paraguay**

Paraguay’s education union (UNE-SIN) announced a day of protest on October 1. The teachers are demanding a 16 percent wage increase. The protest call came after the Education Ministry announced that the wage increase would be limited to six percent.

**Lumber workers picket in Puerto Ordaz, Venezuela**

Lumber workers at the transnational firm Masisa rallied and set up pickets in the city of Puerto Ordaz in Guayana City to protest persecution and harassment by the company in violation of existing contracts. They demanded that fellow worker Carlos Sanchez be rehired. Sanchez was fired on September 17 for demanding benefits owed to him. Workers declared that the company

is keeping them at starvation wages.

The workers, who were joined by other workers in Guayana, have declared that they will continue setting up picket lines, marching, and holding rallies against the company.

### **Strike notices issued to Connecticut group home operators after refusal to negotiate wages and benefits**

The union representing some 600 group home workers at about 70 nursing facilities throughout Connecticut issued strike notices September 21 over the refusal of two management companies to negotiate wages and benefits. The state of Connecticut authorized \$184 million to nursing homes that was designated for raising wages and benefits, but two group home operators, Whole Life, Inc. and Network Inc., have refused to pass the subsidy on to workers.

The strike could commence October 5. Currently, the workers at Whole Life and Network average between \$14 and \$15 an hour. Workers want wages to rise to the \$20 and \$30 an hour range.

Last June, some 2,100 group home workers represented by the New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199, threatened a strike at 200 Connecticut nursing homes. In response, the majority of group homes began incorporating state funding into contracts while Whole Life and Network continued to hold out.

### **Operating engineers strike Kaiser Permanente hospitals in Northern California**

Some 750 members of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 39 went on strike against the hospitals of Kaiser Permanente across Northern California to protest the health care giant's policy of undercutting prevailing wages. The operating engineers perform maintenance on a wide variety of medical equipment such as X-ray machines, sterilization equipment, emergency generators and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning operations.

Kaiser is touting its offer of a \$3,600 average pay increase and is attempting to portray workers as overpaid

in comparison to workers in other regions of the United States. But workers dispute the comparison, first pointing to the incredibly high cost of living in Northern California and secondly, to the fact that they are underpaid in comparison to other workers in that same Northern California region.

The unions, however, are isolating the operating engineers while another 24,000 members of the United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals are engaged in contract negotiations that could lead to a potential strike. These workers authorized strike action last week as operating engineers walked out.

### **Quebec public-sector daycare workers strike**

Eleven thousand workers in Quebec's Centres de la petite enfance (referred to as CPEs) began a series of job actions last week with a one-day strike on September 24. The action was meant to be the first of nine subsequent strike days to be called "at an opportune time probably in the coming weeks," according to the union. The daycare workers, members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, have been without a government contract for the last 18 months.

In addition, two thousand other CPE workers in the smaller CSQ union voted last week to mount six days of strike action in the coming weeks.

The low-wage CPE workers are demanding a significant wage increase and more government funding to improve conditions in the daycare centers including additional resources for special needs children. The starting wage for workers is \$19 per hour, rising to a maximum of \$25 after ten years. Workers are demanding an immediate \$4 per hour increase followed by an annual one percent increase indexed to inflation.

Quebec's publicly funded daycare system oversees hundreds of thousands of children. At any given time, there are over 50,000 children on waiting lists for a space in the popular system that costs only \$8.50 per day per child.



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