Peruvian air traffic controllers strike for 72 hours; San Diego area sanitation workers strike in second week

Workers Struggles: The Americas

27 December 2021

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

Peruvian air traffic controllers strike 72 hours for better conditions, protections from pandemic

Air traffic controllers at Peru's airports initiated a three-day strike beginning at 7 p.m. December 23 to demand better labor conditions and protective measures against COVID-19. A communique from the Air Traffic Controllers Syndicate criticized the Peruvian Commercial Airports Corporation (CORPAC) for "not having solutions to our demands."

Authorities responded by putting "contingency plans" into effect, hiring scab labor to continue flights during the Christmas weekend. They claimed that overall, flights were not affected, though there were some delays and passengers were told to check the status of their flights.

In return for ending a strike last year, CORPAC agreed to provide adequate ventilation and individual spaces for rest during night shifts at 24-hour airports. CORPAC claims that this year, "due to the onslaught of COVID-19," it cannot completely meet these conditions.

Lifeguards union in Argentina issues strike call for wage hike

The Lifeguard Association of Pinamar, a resort town on Argentina's Atlantic coast, announced December 26 that it was going on strike the next day to demand higher pay. The association issued a statement denouncing the refusal of the over 50 resorts lining the shore to restore back pay from 2019 and urged vacationers and residents not to go in the water.

Union Secretary Fernando Espinach told reporters that the conflict had been going on since the previous summer. "At the time, and under the excuse that it was not a good season, they never gave us a salary increase and we never obtained the equal 33 percent based on the interannual cost that the business sector considered 12 months ago."

Argentine petroleum workers strike to demand delivery of bonuses

The Union of Private Petroleum Workers of Río Negro, Neuquén and La Pampa downed their tools in the early morning of December 22 to demand the payment of their year-end bonus as well as an additional bonus agreed to with over 50 service companies in the region. By 2 p.m., most of the companies, which had been filmed signing the agreement months ago, had coughed up the pay.

A union official accused the companies of abusing the workers since they were able to pay the bonuses once they were faced with the walkout. He surmised that they were speculating with the workers' money.

Uruguayan bus company workers reject proposed "pre-agreement"

Workers for the Copsa bus company in Uruguay voted December 23 to reject an agreement that their union had reached in tripartite talks with the firm and the Labor and Social Security Ministry. The union will present a counterproposal to the National Labor Directorate.

Among the workers' objections to the "pre-agreement" is the schedule for payment of debts owed by Copsa, including licenses, vacation pay, unused leave and the Christmas bonus going back to 2019. The company and union had agreed to set the deadline for the payment of debts up to 30,000 pesos (US$676) for December 30, with those over that amount being split between that date and January 30, 2022.

The workers also voted to continue their strike, which they began December 21, until they get a better agreement.

Uruguayan health workers union calls one-day strike to demand year-end bonus, retention of jobs

On December 24, the Uruguayan Health Federation (FUS) called for a one-day general strike on December 28 to demand the payment of health workers' year-end bonus (*aguinaldo*). FUS is also demanding assurances that the health workers will be paid their wages for December and that their jobs are secure.

The decision to hold the strike follows a December 22 court ruling closing down the polyclinic Casa de Galicia in Montevideo due to unpaid debts. The clinic was established in 1917 as a *mutualista*, or mutual aid society institution, and more than 43,000 people used its services in 2021. More than 2,000 nontechnical workers and 900 doctors work there.

However, its debts have reached over 100 million pesos (US$2.25 million), and the court ordered its closure. FUS has called for the resignation of the two trustees appointed by the courts to run Casa de Galicia and requests the intervention of the Ministry of Public Health.

© World Socialist Web Site

Colombian lower house passes law designed to further repress protests and strikes

A bill that would broaden the powers of Colombia's police, military and judiciary to repress protests and strikes passed the House of Representatives and went to the Senate for debate last week. Both legislative houses have right-wing majorities.

The bill has the support of President Iván Duque, under whose administration protests and strikes against his pandemic policies, anti-working-class measures and worsening economic equality have been violently attacked. There have been at least 70 dead and thousands injured since 2019. Opposition politicians have criticized the legislation, claiming that it "puts private property above human life by redefining the concept of proportionality to grant license to kill," according to a November 22 *Prensa Latina* report.

Colombia's poor and working class are plagued by paramilitary and death squad violence in addition to police and military attacks, most of which are ignored or discounted by the government of staunch US ally Duque. Members of unions and indigenous rights, peace and social organizations have all been targeted. Teachers, who are branded as "communists" by the right wing and thus considered fair game, are frequent targets. With inequality and poverty growing, and the end of the pandemic nowhere in sight, the Colombian ruling class is determined to ratchet up the ability of the repressive apparatus to squelch protests and industrial actions.

Colombian soccer players protest excessive number of games

Players in the Liga BetPlay Dimayor, Colombia's premier professional soccer league, held a peaceful protest last week against the excessive number of games they are required to play during the season. The players, both in the men's and women's sections, took the action as the first finals were slated for the 2021-II season.

Players complain that decisions are taken unilaterally by managers, with economic interests taking precedence over conditions. A press release by the players read, "We do not agree that the managers have approved a competition calendar with an excessive number of matches, which affect our minimum rest periods between games, which in the end will affect our health and therefore our elite performance."

San Diego-area sanitation workers rally as strike continues

Striking sanitation workers in Chula Vista, California, held a rally Sunday as the walkout by more than 250 workers who pick up trash in Chula Vista outside San Diego and parts of San Diego County continues into its second week.

The workers are demanding increased pay and safer conditions, including new trash trucks. "We have the fifth most dangerous job in the country and to be doing [it] with poor safety vehicles is not good. The trucks are in poor condition," Dohney Castillo, a driver for Republic Services, told local media.

Republic Services said in a statement Sunday that they were "disappointed that the parties did not reach an agreement on a new labor contract during our Christmas Eve negotiations with the union."

Republic Services is the second-largest waste collection company in the US. It is also in negotiations with sanitation workers in Orange County, California, Los Angeles and New Orleans.

The Teamsters shut down a strike by 400 Orange County sanitation workers against Republic Services, announcing a contract deal December 16. No details of the settlement were released at the time or the date for voting.

New Jersey recycling workers strike over stalled contract negotiations

Drivers and helpers who work out of a recycling facility owned by Shred-It in Lawrence Township, New Jersey, went on strike December 20 to protest the company's refusal to come to terms with workers over wages and working conditions.

Workers first unionized in April of this year under Teamsters Local 469. A month earlier, the Teamsters had filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board dealing with the company's aggressive anti-union stance.

Shred-It provides secure document shredding services for companies and also manufactures machinery for the industry. In 2015, Stericycle, a bio-medical waste management service, purchased Shred-It, making Stericycle one of the big players in the privately owned waste management industry.

The Teamsters have been conducting strikes and unionization drives at Stericycle. Earlier this year, the Teamsters called two strikes at two Ohio plants, but declined to expand the action into a national strike against all Stericyle facilities.

Washington state warehouse workers authorize strike over living standards and COVID-19 protections

Workers at the Veritiv warehouse in Kent, Washington, voted unanimously December 15 to authorize Teamsters Local 117 to call a strike after three months of fruitless negotiations. Local 117 Secretary-Treasurer John Scearcy said of negotiations, "Veritiv's proposals with respect to pay and health and welfare are an insult to essential workers."

The Teamsters report that Veritiv offered workers annual increases of a mere 15 cents and wants to saddle workers with a greater percentage of health care costs.

In addition, workers are angry about the company's refusal to consider measures to control the spread of COVID-19 in the giant warehouse facility. Shop steward Kevin Timme complained, "There needs to be something in the contract that protects us during a pandemic when we get sick and have to be out of work."

Concordia University of Edmonton faculty set January 4 strike date

Faculty at Concordia University of Edmonton are set to strike on January 4 if an agreement with the school's bargaining committee is not reached over the holidays. A walkout would disrupt classes for 2,500 students.

Outstanding issues include salary, workload and job security. Concordia has recorded surpluses of more than $7 million for the past two years. A student group had collected 70 signatures in support of faculty as of the

© World Socialist Web Site

weekend.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site