

## Colorado grocery workers authorize strike, Toluca, Mexico sanitation workers demand back wages

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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### Latin America

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

#### Toluca, Mexico sanitation workers demand back wages

Twenty-four hundred striking state sanitation workers occupied public buildings in the City of Toluca, the state capital of the State of Mexico demanding wages owed to them, plus benefits.

The occupations are the latest measures taken by the striking workers. So far their demands have been ignored. The strikers are concerned that, with a recent change in the city administration, their demands will be ignored.

Throughout Mexico currently thousands of government and education workers are owed wages, often for multiple months.

#### Buenos Aires dock workers protest

Longshore workers rallied and blocked truck traffic at Terminal 5 of the Port of Buenos Aires on December 30 to protest government plans to close the terminal and transform the 800 port workers into part-timers at the remaining terminals.

Following the demonstration, the workers handed in a petition at the Casa Rosada, Argentina's federal government house, in downtown Buenos Aires. The

agreement to close Terminal 5, to end the full-time status of its dock workers, and to lay-off hundreds of others was signed months ago by the trade unions and the General Port Administration, behind the backs of the longshore workers. Since then dock workers have carried out protests and work stoppages.

#### Belo Horizonte Metro workers vote to continue their strike

On December 28, striking workers at the Belo Horizonte municipal transit system voted to continue their strike until January 17. At issue is the government plan to privatize the transit system.

The strike began on December 23. The transit workers are demanding that the metro system be improved, remain under municipal control, that their jobs be protected, and that they be paid a living wage.

#### Striking miners reject contract offer

On the fourth week on strike against the Florida Mining Company, a subsidiary of Yamana Gold, a Canadian based transnational corporation, 45 miles south of Santiago, Chile's capital, workers overwhelmingly rejected a proposed contract on December 28 by 625 no votes out of the 696 miners who work in the mine, which extracts and processes gold, zinc and silver.

The miners are demanding a six percent wage increase, plus other bonuses and benefits.

## United States

### Colorado grocery workers vote for strike authorization

Some 17,000 grocery workers at 87 King Soopers stores in Colorado cast votes for strike authorization on January 2 and 3. United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7 said between 97 – 100 percent of workers voting favored a strike.

King Soopers is offering workers 50 cent wage increases in each year of a four-year contract. But it also wants to implement a two-tier wage system and hire gig workers. The company is also demanding workers shoulder higher health care premiums and seeks to slash benefits. Management also wants to raise the number of hours part-time workers must fulfill to receive benefits.

The contract expires January 8 and a strike could commence the following day. King Soopers has contracted with a company to provide strikebreakers and the union has filed suit over the issue.

The Fortune 500 company Krogers owns King Soopers and another Colorado chain, City Market. But the contract covering workers at City Market's approximately 60 stores does not expire until January 29. The union also represents workers at Safeway and Albertsons.

### St. Paul school district and teachers union enter into closed-door talks

The St. Paul, Minnesota, school district and its teachers union will enter into mediated closed-door talks as the district moves, according to the union, to eliminate caps on class sizes and mental health protections. District spokesman Kevin Burns said the St. Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) contract demands “stretch beyond the district's authorized spending levels.”

The district insists that wage increases must be limited to a mere 1.5 percent in each year of a two-year contract. The union is not asking for much more, calling for annual increases of 2.5 percent, far below the current rate of inflation.

In March 2020, the SPFE used the onset of the pandemic to shut down a three-day strike by 3,500

teachers and school support staff and push through a contract that called for annual wage increases of 1.5 and 2 percent.

## Canada

### London, Ontario food processors set to strike

Production workers at the Dr. Oetker Frozen Pizza manufacturing plant, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), are set to vote on a contract offer on January 8. With the company refusing to address the workers' main demand to end rotating shifts, it is expected that workers will reject the proposed contract.

Such is the opposition to the antiquated shift system—whereby workers labour one week on day shift and then move the next week to the afternoon shift and vice versa—that UFCW officials have not recommended acceptance of the deal. Workers are demanding that they labour permanently on one shift or the other based on seniority selection as the constant changes are detrimental to their health and well-being. The 230 workers would be in a strike position on January 14 should the contract be rejected.



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