

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Tire workers in Argentina strike to reopen parity talks

Workers at three tire factories in Argentina—Bridgestone, Pirelli and Fate—struck on June 3 to demand the reopening of parity talks. The Ministry of Labor had called for arbitration, which expired May 17, and since then, negotiations between the Sutna tire workers union and the companies have stalled.

While demonstrations were held in the vicinities of each plant, some strikers from the Fate plant blocked traffic on a stretch of the Pan-American Highway near Buenos Aires from mid-morning until about 2:00 p.m.

The companies have refused to budge from their latest offer of a 66 percent raise and an annual bonus, while the union said it considers that insufficient when inflation is taken into consideration. Sutna is also demanding double time for work done on Saturday and Sunday.

Venezuelan health workers protest to demand compliance with contract

Health workers marched to the headquarters of the Venezuelan Institute of Social Security in Caracas June 2 to demand that the government comply with their collective contracts. The Fetrasalud health care workers' union federation called the mobilization. Press estimates of the size of the protest ranged from 250 to over 1,000.

The protesters accused the National Budget Office of arbitrarily eliminating economic clauses and contractual benefits. They denounced the government for their low pay and for withholding stipends and bonuses stipulated in the contract. Other demands were provision of supplies and an end to threats of dismissal and intimidation.

A group of protesters delivered a letter to the office of the vice president and said that they expect a response within five days. An assembly of union federations is scheduled for June 8, and if there is an inadequate or no response to their demands, they will call a national protest and might strike.

Panamanian delivery riders strike for better pay and conditions

Motorcycle delivery riders for the company Orden Ya in Panama went on strike beginning May 27. The drivers' demands include a higher fee per order, from \$2.20 to \$3.50, accident insurance and free provision of

company uniforms and boxes, for which they currently must pay. Riders also must pay for gas and maintenance of their motorcycles.

On June 3, Orden Ya claimed that the riders' spokesmen had accepted the company's offer and agreed to end the strike, but the riders rejected the deal.

Public transport drivers in Mexico City block roads to press for higher fares

Mexico City traffic was snarled by blockades at eight key points carried out by drivers of buses, minibuses and "combis" (converted vans) the morning of June 2. The drivers, members of an organization called the Broad Carrier Front, were protesting the refusal of the capital's mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum, to raise their fares from five to eight pesos (US\$0.25 to \$0.40).

Though Mexico City has extensive public transportation, including public buses, trolleys and trains, there are many outlying areas where working people rely on small, private vehicles to get them to their destinations. The city regulates these vehicles, including fares. The drivers say that the rise of the cost of fuel, tires and parts has made it more difficult to survive on the low fares.

The mayor has refused to raise the fares, stating, "Our duty is to respect the economy of families and improve the quality of service." One Broad Carrier Front leader told reporters, "We have been looking for the rate to be raised for at least three years and we have not had any response from this administration." The carriers' protests are likely to continue.

Transit workers in Los Angeles County strike after company threatens lockout and wage cut

Transportation workers for the Antelope Valley Transit Authority (ATVA) in the Los Angeles County cities of Lancaster and Palmdale walked off the job June 3 after the contractor threatened to take away a pay increase at the beginning of January and lock workers out if the union went on strike. Negotiations unraveled when the contractor, Transdev, announced it would not seek a new contract with ATVA.

Starting pay for drivers was \$15.50 an hour until Transdev agreed to implement a 30-38 percent wage increase on January 1 when the contract with Teamsters Local 848 expired. Local 848 represents 160 bus drivers, road supervisors and dispatchers.

The union is seeking an increase in pensions and sick days. It also asked for a \$2,500 retention bonus that was meant to cover medical benefits and pension contributions that accumulated in the six months since the contract expired. The Teamsters have cut that demand back to \$1,500 in recent bargaining.

Macy's workers at five New England department stores authorize strike

Hundreds of workers at Macy's department stores in Warwick, Rhode Island and four Massachusetts locations voted to authorize strike action and demanded wages be brought up to \$15 an hour. Four of the department stores are under a single contract with the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1445, while a store in Boston is represented by the same local but under a different contract.

Macy's announced a \$15 minimum wage for its non-union employees in January. The UFCW is now asking for that same wage for its unionized employees. Massachusetts' minimum wage will be raised to \$15 an hour in 2023.

The union indicates that Macy's has not made any counteroffers and negotiations are stalled. Macy's announced its third quarter sales are up 13 percent compared to a year ago and management bought back \$600 million of its own stock shares.

Sherwin Williams workers strike Bowling Green, Kentucky plant

Workers at the Sherwin Williams paint factory in Bowling Green, Kentucky went on strike June 2 after contract talks broke down.

Negotiations had continued for seven weeks with Teamsters Local 783 unable to reach an agreement with management on contract terms. The union said that working conditions remained the major unsolved issue.

In a statement to the press, local Teamsters Vice President Gerry Francisco went out of his way to strike a conciliatory posture, stating, "The entire negotiation process has been non-confrontational. It's been good to work. We have open lines of communication and we are still working to try and get this back to get it resolved to a place where we can get a contract and these guys get back to work."

For its part, management insisted it had conducted good faith negotiations.

According to the Local 783 Facebook page, the company has attempted to continue production using supervisory personnel. The company has also brought in private security armed with tasers.

Another 55 Sherwin Williams workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 14919, have been on an unfair labor practice strike against Sherwin Williams since February 5 at the company's Bedford Heights, Ohio, aerosol can plant.

Atlantic City casino workers picket over stalled contract talks

Workers from nine Atlantic City, New Jersey casinos staged informational pickets last week after their contract expired with nine casinos. The workers say they need pay raises to cover the soaring price of gasoline and other necessities. The workers are members of UNITE HERE Local 54, which covers about 10,000 workers in eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.

The union has not set a strike deadline or revealed what it is demanding in terms of a pay increase. A Unite Here official said that a strike vote would not be held before the end of June at the earliest. He did not explain the delay, but described the talks as "cordial."

A food server at the Borgata's Angeline restaurant with 37 years in the casino industry gave a different picture. She told the local media, "Casino

workers need a raise. We've given back a lot over the years to the casinos, and now gas prices and food prices have gone up and people are desperate."

She continued, "Mothers and fathers are having a hard time putting food on the table for their children. It's time for the casinos to give back something to the workers."

Sea to Sky transit workers in British Columbia once again reject Unifor's contract recommendation

On strike for 129 days, 80 transit workers, members of Unifor, have now recorded the longest strike in the history of British Columbia. Last week the strikers once again rejected a concessions contract that had been unanimously recommended to them by the local union leadership.

Workers have been without a contract since August 2021. Their wages, pensions, benefits and job security provisions are far inferior to those in Vancouver and Victoria. In addition, about 40 percent of transit workers on the Sea to Sky route lack benefits coverage.

The workers are striking Pacific Western Transportation routes through Whistler, Squamish and the Pemberton Valley. The strike has shut down all public transportation in the area except for the continuation of special services for people with disabilities.

Strike by 630 workers at nickel mine in Quebec Arctic

Workers at the Raglan mine, a large and highly profitable nickel and copper operation in Quebec's Nunavik Region in the Ungava Peninsula are entering the second week of a strike against the global mining giant Glencore Group. The mine has a total of 1,200 employees but only about half, 630 workers, members of the United Steelworkers—are on strike. About 600 other workers are employed by the company as private subcontractors. The mine is the largest producer of nickel in the province.

The steady growth of contracted-out jobs is one of the major issues in the strike. Workers are also demanding wage rises that address skyrocketing inflation in the remote, arctic region and a reversal of terrible living and working conditions in the isolated facility. Currently, workers fly in and out of the mine complex after lengthy stints that involve 11-hour daily shifts for 21 consecutive days. Since the strike began, the company has closed all mine operations and sent most workers back to their home communities.



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