

Strike by 1,500 education workers at Dalhousie University In Nova Scotia, Louisville transit workers authorize 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.

Latin America

State workers in Argentine province strike over delays, breaches in negotiations

Members of the State Workers Association (ATE) in Argentina's Chubut province struck October 20 over the lack of progress in negotiations over salaries and conditions. The union issued a statement denouncing "breaches of different commitments assumed by the Government, as well as the delay of several months of files for signature, recategorizations, transfers to the plant, signatures of the Collective Bargaining Agreements and third-quarter wage increases."

Workers in a range of ministries in the province, including Family and Social Development, Economy, Infrastructure, Public Administration, Fisheries, Fire Management, Revenue, Agriculture, Livestock, Industry and Commerce, Environment, Tourism and Labor, joined the walkout.

The Ministry of Labor responded by decreeing "mandatory conciliation" and ordering the ATE to "refrain from adopting any type of measure that means modifying and/or altering the provision of the labor debt in a habitual, normal and regulatory manner, under penalty of declaring the measure illegal, and of provoking by his exclusive fault the rupture of the conciliatory procedure dictated." The Ministry set a hearing date of October 26.

The ATE replied that it would not abide by the order and would continue the strike through October 24 and 25 "in the entire Provincial Public Administration except health."

Transport workers federation announces strike for bonus for retirees

Argentina's General Union of Transport Workers Associations (UGATT) announced October 20 that its affiliates will carry out a 24-hour strike on November 8 to demand a bonus of 50,000 pesos (US\$325) for retirees and pensioners. The strike will include truck, taxi, bus and shuttle drivers, loading dock workers and railway workers.

A UGATT statement declared that "we will never abandon those who made us who we are, those who gave us life and the values with which we fight to live with dignity and aspire to a fairer community."

General strike by Uruguayan construction workers demands employment, investment

Uruguay's national construction workers union Sunca called a nationwide strike and march October 20. The union reported that it had contracted 300 buses to bring workers to Montevideo and that up to 10,000 protesters participated.

The protesters gathered at the University of the Republic and marched to the Legislative Palace. Union officials spoke on the deep cuts to housing, health and education of the last two years, resulting in thousands of job losses.

Several large construction projects, including a railway and port, are slated to end in 2023, and thousands of workers in construction and related industries will be thrown out of work as a result. Among Sunca's demands are more investment in housing and infrastructure and US\$1 billion for sanitation. Sunca also called for strengthening of the social security system.

Trinidad residents protest to demand jobs

Residents of La Brea, a coastal town in southwest Trinidad, held a protest to demand work October 20. The action, in which several roads were blocked, followed a similar protest on October 12. A protest was also staged at the entrance of the La Brea Industrial Estate.

The protests were brought on by the docking of an international barge, the Safe Concordia, at the La Brea port. Hoping to get work, some residents inquired but were told that the barge had an in-house crew of 400 and there would be no hiring in the community.

According to Labour Minister Stephen McClashie, "The barge was docked simply as a safe haven. The barge is actually not doing any repairs or refurbishment. There is no work available on the barge."

This did not assuage the protesters, who have been hard-hit by inflation and the lack of steady employment.

University professors in the Dominican Republic strike for increased travel allowance

Professors at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (AUSD) began an indefinite strike on October 19. The walkout, which affected 16 campuses and regional centers, was called by the Federation of Teachers'

Associations of the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (Faprouasd) after an assembly on October 18.

The main demand of the teachers is an update of the per diem pay for travel expenses, since many have to travel to the interior to teach. While the cost-of-living soars, their pay rate has remained the same as it was when finalized in 2016.

Classes at the AUSD headquarters in Santo Domingo continued, though Faprouasd president Pastor de la Rosa did not rule out shutting them down if the demand is not met. The union resolved to meet on October 25 if there is no response from the university administration.

United States

Louisville, Kentucky, transit workers authorize strike despite state law prohibition

On October 20 public transit workers in Louisville, Kentucky voted by a 95 percent margin to authorize strike action. The vote comes after a previous 97 percent vote in September to reject a contract proposal by TARC (Transit Authority of River City).

TARC offered a mere 7.5 percent increase over three years to drivers and a 9 percent increase for mechanics. Additionally, management eliminated the cost-of-living escalator. Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1447 was negotiating for a 21.5 percent increase for workers and has raised questions about safety and the breakdown of equipment.

ATU president Lillian Brents said, “We have been exhausting all possibilities before escalating to the next step.” However, no strike date has been set. Kentucky state law prohibits strikes by public employees and the ATU’s contract also bars strikes and work slowdowns. Contract negotiations will resume on November 2.

Strike ends at California Corn Nuts plant

Workers at the Corn Nuts production plant in Fresno, California, ended their two-month strike October 19 over a high-priced health care plan that cost workers thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs. Details on the new health care plan were not available and the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) spokesman only indicated that the 40 striking workers “got what they needed.” The new four-year contract provides for annual 75 cent wage increases.

Corn Nuts was taken over by Hormel Foods from Kraft Hines in 2021. Hormel exploited the fact that the BCTGM union did not have successor contract language in place at the Corn Nuts plant to protect workers in the event of a transfer of ownership. Hormel then unilaterally imposed a new medical plan with higher deductibles, premiums, and increased employee contributions.

New York City condominium workers strike

Workers who service the luxury Clock Tower Building in the Tribeca section of Manhattan went on strike October 18. Members of 32BJ SEIU are demanding wages be increased from the current \$21.50 an hour to \$27 and better health care coverage.

El Ad US Holding, Inc., which operates the condominium, voluntarily

recognized the union in 2021, but negotiations have gone nowhere for the doormen, porters, concierges and maintenance workers. Units in the former New York Life Insurance Company building-turned-condominium sell in the range of \$3.57 million to \$24.45 million.

Canada

Strike by 1,500 education workers at Dalhousie University

Fifteen hundred teaching assistants, part-time instructors, markers and demonstrators at Nova Scotia’s Dalhousie University went on strike last Wednesday over the poverty wages paid out to them over many years. The workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) are demanding significant increases to battle the current and projected inflationary spiral and to catch up with the wages paid in similar institutions of higher learning across the country.

Compared to other universities, Dalhousie pays some of the lowest wages to part-time instructors and teaching assistants. Teaching assistants earn only \$24.41 per hour compared to an average of \$35.44 at similar institutions. Part-time faculty instructors earn only \$5,232 per semester course. The average across the country is \$7,160.

Education workers have not received a wage increase since 2019. The University has offered raises of only 12 percent over the life of a four-year contract for part-time academics, 8 percent for hourly paid instructors, 17 percent for teaching assistants and 30 percent for markers and demonstrators. The proposal fails to address the burning issue of wage parity with other universities and is, in fact, a wage cut on the already inferior compensation due to persistently high inflation rates.

The strikers are demanding a still inadequate 17.54 percent for part-time academics and 27.33 percent for teaching assistants over four years, and for the markers/demonstrators designation to be eliminated and those workers re-graded as teaching assistants to reflect their actual duties in the system.



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