

Protests over fuel prices in Peru; Dominican doctors set date for nationwide walkout

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

Fuel prices in Peru spur strikes and blockades by truckers, urban transport drivers, farmers

Heavy cargo truckers, urban transport drivers and farmers in Peru carried out strikes and blockades in Peru last week. On November 23, the city of Cusco saw traffic paralyzed except for a highway connecting the city with the Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport, in which police maintained a “safe preferential corridor.” Some 50 trucks blocked one lane of the highway connecting Cusco with Puno, about 390 km (240 miles) to the southwest.

University of Cusco staff and students, with their own sets of demands, joined the strike actions. Farmers, who in addition to soaring fuel prices and inflation have suffered shortages of fertilizers—despite government promises to provide them—joined the carriers in over a dozen roadblocks.

The blockades interrupted tourist traffic to the historic site, Machu Picchu, though the Peruvian Association of Receptive and Internal Tourism Operators issued a strike call for November 24 at the world-famous ruins to demand that the Ministry of Economy and Finance reverse its plans to remove some resources from the citadel of Machu Picchu to distribute them to other tourist sites, which would have a detrimental effect on research and conservation efforts.

Doctors in Dominican Republic call nationwide one-day strike over health care coverage, pensions

On November 24, the Dominican Medical Association (CMD) called for a 24-hour nationwide strike November 30.

Only emergency and critical care cases will be treated during the walkout.

CMD president Senen Caba told reporters that the main demand will be “a new law based on rights, which does not privilege commercial aspects over human suffering and seeks decent health and pensions.”

The doctors object to the promotion of health care plans run by private companies and known as ARS (Health Risk Administrators), which Caba described as “a swindle.” They are calling for “a new law based on rights, which does not privilege commercial aspects over human suffering and seeks decent health and pensions” and for disaffiliation from the regional ARS branches.

The CMD is also demanding a revamping of the Social Security System.

In addition to the strike, the CMD has urged its members and supporters, including trade unions and social organizations, to join a march in the capital Santo Domingo that will start at the CMD headquarters and end at the National Congress.

Buenos Aires subway workers protest unsafe conditions

Workers for the Emova company, a concessionaire for the Buenos Aires subway system, continued token protest actions sanctioned by their union to press their demands. These include the reduction of the workweek to five days with two free days and the deactivation of trains containing asbestos.

A union statement asserted that the firm has so far ignored their demands. The statement adds: “We remind you that asbestos is a carcinogenic mineral, and that we currently have 75 colleagues with conditions caused by exposure to this mineral, and unfortunately three colleagues died from diseases caused by asbestos. For workers, reducing the weekly workday would mean reducing exposure to this carcinogen and gaining health.”

An Emova statement claimed that shortening the working day is “unfeasible” and “incompatible with an adequate operation

of the service.”

The measures called by the union were limited to a one-hour strike on November 23 and the opening of the turnstiles on one line for one hour.

United States

Orlando, Florida, convention workers vote to strike

Workers at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, voted on November 21 to strike the French food service giant Sodexo by a 235-0 margin in an effort to win higher wages and benefits. The vote comprised 84 percent of the bargaining unit represented by Unite Here Local 737.

Currently, on-call workers make a mere \$13 an hour while full-time workers bring in a fraction more at \$13.50. The living wage for a single adult in Orlando is just over \$17.61 an hour, while for a family of four it rises to \$36.89, and these figures fail to account for recent skyrocketing rents and inflation.

The union has been in negotiations since August and is calling for a minimum wage of \$18 an hour or a \$3 wage increase, whichever is higher. Workers are also demanding increases in pensions and better scheduling.

Workers could strike as early as December 1. Negotiations are set to resume December 13. Sodexo operates in 55 countries and has over 412,000 employees. It had an operating profit of more than \$18 billion in 2021.

Chicago air cargo warehouse workers protest working conditions

About 100 warehouse workers at Swissport’s air cargo facility at Chicago’s O’Hare airport staged a press conference and demonstration in front of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration offices. Service Employees International Union Local 1 filed complaints against the aviation services company charging dangerous working conditions due to faulty vehicles, unsanitary conditions and extreme heat in the warmer months.

Swissport operates at 307 airports in 50 countries and has a workforce of 66,000. Its annual revenues exceed \$2.9 billion.

Canada

McMaster University education workers on strike in Hamilton

Some 2,900 teaching and research assistants at McMaster University struck last week after mediated bargaining sessions failed to produce a new collective agreement. The education workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), are demanding wage increases to keep up with inflation and balance pay inequities between undergraduate and graduate teaching assistants. Job security and contractual protections against tuition increases are other demands not met by university management.

Currently graduate assistants earn \$44 an hour. The union requires a 9 percent increase for the first year then a 3 percent increase in the next two years. Undergraduate teaching assistants make \$25 an hour as part-time workers who also are enrolled in classes. The union is asking for a 20 percent raise in the first year, with 6 percent subsequently over the next two years.

Currently classes at the university are continuing with the seasonal holiday soon to take effect.

Dare Food workers strike Quebec plant

About 100 workers, members of the Union of Professional and Clerical Employees, went on strike this past Sunday against the derisory pay offer presented to them by the management of the Dare Food processing plant located in Ste-Martine just south-west of Montreal. Workers at the facility have been without a contract since April 2021. They voted by 85 percent to strike on November 13 after 18 months of failed negotiations.

The union is demanding an 18 percent increase over three years retroactive to April 2021. The pay proposal does not even keep up with the inflation rate over the projected period. Dare management has offered 13.25 percent over four years, representing even a deeper real-wage cut than that proposed by the union.



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