

New York Times staff threatens December 8 walkout over contract issues; Venezuela shipyard workers continue occupation

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Venezuela shipyard workers continue Puerto Cabello occupation

An occupation of a shipyard in the Caribbean coast city of Puerto Cabello continued last week. The strikers are denouncing oppressive working conditions imposed by the management of the DIANCA company and the total lack of response by the Maduro government.

Strikers demand an end to high-risk working conditions, such as working in enclosed spaces, very high noise levels, constant exposure to fumes from welding and metal cutting, the lack of emergency medical personnel and ambulance services, and the absence of fire-fighting equipment. “We confront an inhuman and insensitive government that placed the profits of capital over the health and lives of workers,” declared a striker.

Furthermore, the workers report a history of unpaid wages, production incentive bonuses, lack of proper work equipment and uniforms, and attacks on the rights of retirees.

DIANCA is one of Venezuela’s largest enterprises. Yet management claims there is no money to meet the workers’ demands. The company and government officials are holding over the workers the threat of sending the National Guard to expel the workers from the shipyard.

“White wave” of health protests and strikes in Argentina

Health workers carried out protest marches and strikes in Cordoba, an industrial province in central Argentina.

On Sunday, striking Jose Urrutia hospital workers blocked a major highway. The workers are demanding wages that keep up with the rising cost of living. The hospital is the only one in the Sierras Chicas region, on the Eastern foothills of the Andes Mountains, on which more than 60,000 people depend. Health workers there complain of conditions of extreme overwork. Many employees often are forced to work 20 or more hours a day.

The Urrutia Hospital struggle is one of 50 strikes and protests taking place at hospitals in Buenos Aires and Cordoba provinces. The majority of these protest strikes confront the provincial governments as well as the health care trade unions that, in alliance with the government, are pushing workers back to work.

Buenos Aires transit workers protest

Subway workers, demanding higher wages and better working conditions, carried on a partial closure of major station hubs in this city of 13 million inhabitants. The strikers are demanding a shorter work week, that the company hire more workers, and that older, asbestos-laced, equipment be replaced with new trains. The health of scores of workers has been damaged by the asbestos in the older trains. The use of asbestos in trains and buildings was prohibited in 2001 in Argentina.

New York Times staff set December 8 strike deadline

The union for 1,000 *New York Times* newsroom staff has set a December 8 deadline for a strike if management does not agree to new contract terms. NewsGuild of New York and *Times* management have been in talks for a year and a half that have focused on economic issues.

Management has continued to advance insulting and inadequate pay offers even as it lavishes dividends on its stockholders. One tweet from the union read, “In 2022, the @nytimes spent millions of dollars to purchase Wordle and The Athletic and allocated \$150 million in stock buybacks to its investors and yet it is still offering wage ‘increases’ that amount to pay cuts during record-high inflation.”

The membership has voted authorization for the NewsGuild to call a 24-hour strike if progress is not made in talks. The *Times*, for its part, expressed “disappointment” with the threat of a strike and claimed that it had offered “significant” pay increases.

Workers at Canton, North Carolina paper mill in position to strike

Workers at the Evergreen Packaging paper mill in Canton, North Carolina seem set to strike after rejecting another management contract offer November 30. Some 850 members of the United Steelworkers voted down an agreement that would have done little to improve conditions for the workers, who start at the poverty wage of \$15.53 an hour. It was the second contract rejection by the workers in less than two months. The company’s first offer was voted down in October.

When asked if a strike was being considered, Local 507 President Troy Dills refused to give a direct answer to the media. “There’s a procedure, I don’t want to get into that in detail obviously, but we try to avoid a strike. That’s the intention,” he stated. “It is a possibility. Yes, it is.”

Dill said that management and the union would resume talks, but refused to state a strike deadline.

Picket hit by car in Iowa food products strike

The union representing striking workers at the Ingredion food products plant in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, said a worker on picket duty was hit by a car dropping off a scab worker. The president of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) Local 100G told KCRG news that a cellphone video shows the striker walking on the sidewalk when he was hit. Other picketing workers allege the driver pulled out a gun.

Some 120 Ingredion workers went on strike back on August 1 after the company demanded a host of concessions, including the right to unilaterally increase health care costs; cuts in vacation and seniority rights; and plans by management to outsource the company's laboratory department. Workers also detest the current two-tier wage system.

In September, Ingredion had brought armed security guards into bargaining sessions with the BCTGM. Ingredion is a leader in developing, producing and marketing specialty ingredients for industrial and food applications. It employs 12,000 workers at 44 facilities and has markets in 120 countries.

According to the BCTGM, recent negotiations reduced the number of contested contract issues from 26 to 5, but neither side is providing over-all details. One issue the company has refused to consider is an amnesty clause whereupon at the conclusion of the strike no disciplinary actions or firings will take place.

Workers at a LaPorte, Indiana detergent plant locked out over demand to end 60-hour work schedule

The company MonoSol locked out its workforce at its LaPorte, Indiana, facility after workers voted overwhelmingly to reject the company's last contract offer. MonoSol's proposal to Teamsters Local 135 called for a 17.6 percent wage increase over four years and a \$5,000 signing bonus.

But what is infuriating workers is a grueling 60-hour workweek. "It's rough," Tyler Darnell told the *Northwest Indiana Times*. He has worked 60 hours a week ever since he began working for MonoSol 11 years ago.

"They need to hire more people, period," said newly elected Local 135 president Dustin Roach. "They're screwing these guys around. They don't want to call it an understaffing issue. It's an understaffing issue."

The LaPorte plant makes single-use detergents and dishwasher soaps. MonoSol is a subsidiary of chemical manufacturing company Kuraray, based in Tokyo, Japan.

Workers strike Pennsylvania automotive corporation over pay and benefits

Workers at Autoneum Automotive North America in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, launched a strike December 1 after eight months of fruitless negotiations have failed to produce an acceptable agreement. Members of Workers United Local 1700, an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union, are demanding wage increases to match inflation,

increased health care benefits and any increases in wages to date back to April when the old contract expired.

Brian Heverly, president of Local 1700, said the strike was the product of the company's refusal to take workers' demands "seriously."

The Bloomsburg plant manufactures insulation products for cars and trucks. Autoneum operates 53 plants in 24 countries and employs nearly 12,000 workers, concentrating on acoustic and thermal products for the automotive industry.

Federal public service workers demonstrate across the country

Members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) protested stalled negotiations last week that have left 230,000 federal civil servants without a contract since June 2021. Workers from Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa in Ontario, where more than half the union's members are located, demonstrated in front of major government installations. They were joined by other demonstrators in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Gatineau, Quebec and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Talks broke down last May after government negotiators offered a meager wage increase well below current and projected inflation rates and failed to address key issues around remote working rights and provisions. The byzantine collective bargaining process for the federal government workers then saw the two sides handed over to a mediator for several more months.

With no agreement reached, negotiators now are in hearings with yet another layer of the government's collective bargaining bureaucracy. Hearings with the Federal Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board's Public Interest Commission are expected to complete a set of non-binding recommendations later in December. Statements from the union indicate that this report will offer contract provisions well short of the membership's expectations.

If no settlement is reached, a strike vote will not be taken until spring 2023. Should workers vote to strike at that time, they will be in a legal strike position in June, two years after the expiration of their previous contract.



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