

Bridgestone tire workers strike in Argentina over sackings, Ft. Wayne Philharmonic musicians launch first strike in Indiana orchestra's history

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

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### Argentine tire workers strike over dismissals

Workers at a Bridgestone tire company plant in Llavallol, a district in the Greater Buenos Aires urban conurbation, began a strike December 7 over the dismissal of three coworkers. The workers had complained of changes in the Final Inspections department that, according to a statement by the Single Union of Argentine Tire Workers (SUTNA), were “imposed unilaterally by Bridgestone, arbitrarily modifying methods and jobs, which put the lives and psychophysical integrity of workers at risk ...”

The statement further asserted, “This dangerous and arrogant attitude was also put into practice by the employer through mistreatment and abuse by supervisors, and the repeated application of unfounded and, therefore, arbitrary disciplinary sanctions to numerous workers, generating a tense work climate prone to promote accidents and psychophysical illnesses.”

SUTNA notified the Ministry of Labor of the job action, declaring that “in the minutes of joint agreement, dated September 29, 2022, the company signed in point 4 a commitment to exhaust all instances and processes of dialogue to reach agreements within the framework of good faith, preserving the work environment within a framework of mutual respect, avoiding carrying out any type of measure that could affect the rights of workers, a commitment that has just been openly violated by unilaterally and arbitrarily modifying work systems in various sectors.”

The strike, which was decided upon in assemblies following the dismissals, is scheduled to continue until December 14. The statement concluded that if Bridgestone employers “do not modify their actions in a concrete way and render the dismissals ineffective, subsequent measures will be announced in a timely manner.”

### Judicial workers in Mexico City strike for salaries, bonuses, food vouchers

Workers for Mexico City's Superior Court began a strike December 6 after they were told by the institution's head, Rafael Guerra Álvarez, that they would not be receiving their Christmas bonuses and food vouchers. The first bimonthly payment of their salaries, due on December 5, had not

been deposited either.

The judicial workers, which include judges, magistrates, administrators, interns and secretaries, closed and padlocked family, civil and criminal courtrooms, and draped banners saying, “We demand payment of Christmas bonuses” at the entrances. Some striking workers set up tents to prevent access to buildings, while others have slowed traffic by cutting off roads.

The actions were taken without the support of the judicial workers' union. On December 8, Guerra Álvarez announced that the Christmas bonuses would be deposited the next day and that both salary payments and the food vouchers were set for delivery on December 14. The striking workers returned to their posts on December 9.

### Bahamian public service workers protest government stalling on industrial agreement

Members of the Bahamas Public Service Union (BPSU) held a protest outside the House of Assembly in Nassau December 8. The BPSU accuses the government of refusing to bargain in good faith, stalling on signing industrial agreements and union-busting. In addition, the BPSU decried a raise that was unilaterally imposed and that favored senior personnel.

Demonstrators chanted, “We want our money, and we want it now” and barricaded a portion of Parliament Street.

The Bahamas National Alliance Trade Union Congress claims that the government has not responded to letters, emails and calls or submitted any counterproposals. Government spokespersons say that proposals are being “cleaned up” and will be provided to the union when ready.

The union leadership so far has balked at calling for industrial action. BPSU President Kimsley Ferguson told reporters, “We are not at this particular point ready to indicate where and what it is we're going to do.”

### Argentine teachers strike over shortchanging of salaries

The Union of Education Workers of Río Negro (Unter) held a plenary meeting in Viedma, capital of Argentina's Río Negro Province, on December 6 and called a strike for December 7, protesting a shortfall of 10 percent of wages paid at the end of November. Unter claims that this is in violation of the agreement with the Education Ministry, which had agreed to a 16 percent raise. The ministry claims the 10 percent is a

“recovery” of the pattern of the third quarter. An Unter statement calls it “arbitrary, unilateral and abusive.”

Demonstrations were held throughout the province. In Viedma, a delegation delivered two documents to the Ministry of Labor “to request the reopening of parity talks and demand the urgent rectification of the liquidation of the teacher salary for the month of November,” said a statement on the union’s website. The union tried to deliver the same documents to the Minister of Education, but “but at the headquarters of that ministry, no official came out to receive them.”

The call for reopening salary discussion follows a national agreement between the CTERA (Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic) and the national Education Ministry of a 114 percent salary raise to be applied in 2023.

### **Fort Wayne, Indiana orchestra musicians on strike for increased wages**

Members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic declared their first strike in the orchestra’s history December 8 as they have failed to resolve a wage dispute with symphony management. The Fort Wayne Philharmonic Players’ Association is asking for a 46 percent wage increase to counter the meager 11.5 percent wage increase offered by management.

Campbell MacDonald, who chairs the Players’ Association, said in a statement that the Philharmonic “has yet to propose pay that allows us to afford basic needs and is married to the elimination of full-time positions.”

The Philharmonic canceled last weekend’s concerts while the musicians staged a free event before a packed crowd on December 10. Negotiators have met nine times and have a planned meeting on December 12. The old agreement expired on September 1 and both sides have agreed to mediated talks.

### **Wisconsin Red Cross workers will strike unless management comes to an agreement this week**

Red Cross workers in Wisconsin will launch a strike right before the Christmas holidays unless an acceptable agreement is reached this week. The strike would take place during the Red Cross’ 37th annual Holiday Blood Drive at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison on December 23 between 5:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

The event represents the Red Cross Locals 1205 and 1558 of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which have been in negotiations with the Red Cross for 16 months. The old agreement expires December 15, at which point, without a new agreement, preparations will begin for a strike on December 23.

Neither side has revealed details about the negotiations. AFSCME has said the Red Cross opened negotiations by saying “there was no money left for them because they spent it all on raises for workers in other states.” AFSCME also accused the Red Cross of rescheduling or canceling 21 bargaining sessions and had only attended one.

The strike would come as Wisconsin blood banks are reporting a blood shortage.

### **Strikes and protests by air cargo workers at several airports**

Airport cargo workers at three airports took strike action against Swissport International December 8 to protest working conditions, wage theft and retaliation by management for union organizing. The strikes took place at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport, Newark International Airport and Boston Logan International and were joined by protests at another dozen airports.

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is seeking to organize Swissport workers and has filed complaints with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on behalf of workers at O’Hare Airport over unsafe heavy equipment, excessively high temperatures in warehouses during the summer and no heat in offices and warehouses in winter.

At Newark International, the SEIU filed a complaint with the Department of Labor that Swissport is not paying a mandated additional \$4.80 an hour under conditions where they fail to contribute to the cost of health care. Additionally, workers are seeking better wages.

Chris Enterline, a first-year worker for Swissport at O’Hare Airport, who has advocated for the union, told the *Chicago Sun Times* that management, “pulled me aside and told me this is going to be a career ender for me ... I really want to make the workplace safer so people will stay on the job. The turnover is incredibly high. If you work for Swissport any length of time, you will get hurt.”

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

### **Quebec steelworkers rally in support of striking seamen and locked out dockworkers**

More than 200 steelworkers rallied in Quebec City last week in support of 21 striking seamen at the maritime services company Ocean Remorquage. The company is one of the main suppliers of integrated marine services in Canada. They provide services such as dredging, floating wharves, harbour towing and marine equipment rentals.

The seamen, members of the Syndicat des Métallos/United Steelworkers, have been without a contract since April 2021 and went on strike on June 20, 2022. The strikers are demanding a significant wage increase to bring wages up to general industry standards whilst the company’s miserly wage offer amounts to a real wage cut when inflation is figured into the equation. Management also seeks to undercut scheduling arrangements that will disrupt family life and increase already onerous shift requirements.

The company has already brought in scabs who have crossed picket lines to work their boats in the St. Lawrence River. Workers report that these replacements are being paid more than the wage that the union proposed during the bargaining sessions.

The rally also called for an end to the use of management scabs at the lengthy lockout of 81 longshoremen, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, at the Port of Quebec (City). That lockout began in mid-September. Workers there are also demanding a significant wage increase and have refused to accept the imposition of gruelling 12-hour shifts. The Port processes over 28 million tonnes of cargo a year. It is one of the top five ports in the country. It also is an important tourism hub, with more than 236,000 visitors passing through each year on international cruises.

Workers in the province of Quebec, who are employed by companies that are federally (not provincially) regulated, are not subject to restrictions on the use of scab labour stipulated by provincial legislation.

The struggle at the Port of Quebec docks follows on the heels of a major battle at the Port of Montreal over grueling work schedules, a vicious

disciplinary procedure, unsafe working conditions and speedup. With the connivance of the CUPE leadership, Justin Trudeau's federal Liberal government criminalized a strike by the 1,150 Montreal longshoremen after just four days in April 2021.



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