Argentine education workers hold strikes and protests, Canada Revenue Agency employees take strike vote

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

Argentine education workers in struggle

April began with protests and strikes by teachers and education workers across Argentina. At issue are wages and working conditions.

In the industrial city of Cordoba, educators marched and rallied demanding wages above the poverty line, payment for strike days, and an end to excessive taxation of teachers' wages. The protest took place alongside a strike by health workers in Cordoba province.

Since April 3, the strike struggle has spread across the entire province, with more and more teachers participating in protests and strikes, in addition to a two-day provincewide strike last Monday and Tuesday.

Mass rallies and protest strikes by educators and health workers also took place last week in cities in the Patagonian region of Argentina. Educators were joined by parents and students demanding better pay and working conditions.

Buenos Aires Synthon chemical strike triggered by firing of a worker

Workers at the Synthon plant in the city of San Lorenzo, Buenos Aires, Argentina walked off their jobs and set up pickets following the dismissal of a high-seniority worker at the plant, allegedly for not following correct procedures. Following the dismissal, a shop-floor assembly declared that they would strike until the reinstatement of their fellow worker.

According to the strikers, the firing of this employee was the last straw in a campaign of harassment by the company against shop-floor workers. Last November workers walked out to stop the plant from introducing part-time contingent labor. At the beginning of this year, management reduced wages and hours of work.

Mexico: Employees of Oaxaca Contemporary Art Museum stage mobilization

Employees at the Oaxaca Contemporary Art Museum (OCAM) mobilized on April 11 in memory of the violent eviction that took place two years ago of workers at the museum demanding back pay. In April 2021, museum workers were violently expelled from the museum by security police belonging to the Industry and Commerce Bank Association. Following their eviction, Oaxaca state authorities launched an investigation, that has yet to resolve anything.

At the time, the striking workers, who were owed more than a year's back wages, had occupied the museum to prevent its closure. They were violently evicted. Two years later, their case has not been resolved and their back wages have not been paid.

Workers at the Altos Hornos, Mexico steel plant block roads and burn tires in Coahuila

On April 4 steelworkers employed by the Altos Hornos Mexico steel plant in the northern state of Coahuila (which borders the US state of Texas), blocked roads and burned tires demanding a solution to the crisis confronted by the plant following cuts in electric service on February 28.

The workers are demanding back wages and pensions.

The steel company, Mexico's largest, is on the verge of bankruptcy and has been involved in the Odebrecht corruption scandal. It has a history of breaking wage and pension agreements with its workers. In June 2020, 300 miners occupied the Altos Hornos-owned Carlos III coal mine, over the same issues.

United States

Virginia AdvanSix chemical workers strike against divisive company wage offer

Over 340 workers at the AdvanSix chemical plant in Hopewell, Virginia, went on strike April 6 after the company made a wage offer that benefited just over half the workforce. Region 5 representative for

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the International Chemical Workers Union Council and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union said, “Even after all the record profits, the company arrived on the first day of negotiations with a wage adjustment for 51% of the bargaining in the first year and zero wage increase for the other 49% of the bargaining unit in the first year.”

In years 2 through 5 of the rejected proposal, management only offered “nominal wage increases” for the entire membership, according to the union. AdvanSix refused to extend the contract and has now cut off workers’ health insurance coverage. Workers are also plagued by having to work consecutive 18-hour shifts.

Workers widely recognized management’s ploy as a divide-and-conquer strategy. But there is a further divide. The current strikers work at the company’s south-side facility in Hopewell. The north-side plant operates under a separate agreement with the United Steelworkers and is continuing to work under terms of a separate agreement. AdvanSix has two other facilities in Virginia along with facilities in Alabama and Pennsylvania.

Jacksonville, Florida newspaper workers protest years without a wage increase

Workers at the *Florida Times-Union* newspaper held a rally in Jacksonville April 7 to demand increased pay. The journalists and staffers have not had a raise since 2018 and the newsroom staff has shrunk from 63 employees in 2019 to a mere 22 today.

“We’re asking for Gannett to support local journalism, to invest in our newsroom and invest in the local journalists who are doing the work,” said David Bauerlei, a *Times-Union* reporter. He called attention to the fact that employees “have been faced with year-after-year increases in the cost of living, no wage increases in 2018. It makes it much harder for us to get by to do the job we love...”

Gannett, which owns the *Times-Union*, is the largest US newspaper company in terms of total daily circulation. In 2019 Gannett merged with Gatehouse Media, in which it acquired a significant amount of debt. This, combined with shrinking profit margins has led to an escalated attack on workers.

Chicago hospitality workers vote to strike

Hospitality workers at Navy Pier in Chicago voted to strike last week. Members of Unite Here Local 1 have been negotiating with Maverick Hotels and Restaurants for more than a year without coming to an agreement.

The bargaining unit comprises housekeepers, cooks, servers and bartenders at Offshore rooftop, Lirica restaurant and Sable Hotel. Workers complain about unaffordable health insurance and wage theft.

Maverick added three new hotels in Chicago to its portfolio last year. The company is a nationwide developer and operator of hotels, resorts and restaurants.

Canada

Canada Revenue Agency workers vote “overwhelming” for strike action

The 35,000 Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) workers have voted “overwhelmingly” in favour of strike action, reported an April 7 Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) press release.

Under Canada’s laborious collective bargaining system, the CRA workers, whose contract expired at the end of October 2021, will be in a legal strike position as of Friday, April 14. However, PSAC is expected to delay any job action until at least the completion of four days of mediated talks next week with the federal Liberal government.

Canada’s official annual inflation rate soared above 8 percent last June and remains over 5 percent. Yet the government is offering a total wage increase of just 8.5 percent in a four year-agreement. It is similarly trying to impose real wage cuts on 120,000 other federal workers whose bargaining agent is also PSAC.

In four separate bargaining units representing so-called core federal employees, these 120,000 workers are currently in the midst of their own strike vote, the results of which are to be announced later this week.

In a press interview, Canadian Labour Congress Executive Vice President and former top PSAC official Larry Rousseau touted the possibility of a joint strike by 155,000 PSAC members, saying it would be “historic.”

This bluster is meant to disarm rank-and–file workers, while the union bureaucracy maneuvers to come to terms with a government that is spending tens of billions of dollars on waging war against Russia and preparing for war with China but claims that it cannot afford to compensate its employees for the highest inflation in decades.

Canada’s unions, which are strong supporters of the Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government and the deal under which the social-democratic NDP has pledged to keep it in office through June 2025, have no intention of waging a serious struggle against the government.

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