

Argentine dockworkers walk out over death of worker amid rising tide of struggle across the country

Workers Struggles: The Americas

16 May 2023

The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature
Latin America

Rosario, Argentina dockworkers on strike over the death of worker

A 60-year-old longshoreman drowned on May 12 at 4:30 in the morning in the Port of Rosario, in Argentina's Paraná River. In response his fellow workers declared themselves on strike.

The worker slipped from on top of a truck at the edge of the dock. Other workers immediately rescued him from the river, but could not prevent his death.

Workers denounce port authorities over unsafe conditions that exist throughout the port. One worker pointed out that, while there are life vests in the facility, none of them are distributed among the longshore workers. Workers also report being overworked and underpaid.

The work stoppage takes place in an atmosphere of open rebellion among Argentine workers. The Rosario longshoremen recently ended strike action over the sacking of 25 dockworkers and attacks on wages and working conditions.

Buenos Aires subway workers strike

On Monday May 15, Buenos Aires subway workers engaged in a rolling wave of protest strikes, from one line to another, over wages and working hours. The workers also denounce the presence of asbestos in the air due to outdated equipment, affecting workers' health.

Unions and social organizations in Argentina call for May 18 protest to demand food relief

A protest was set this week by union and social organizations over the demand for the delivery of food assistance for community kitchens. The protest will take place in front of the Ministry of Social Development. Organizers say they anticipate a large turnout.

A historic drought has devastated the harvest of key crops such as soybeans and corn and worsened the country's precarious economic situation. Argentina has slashed spending to meet targets set by the

International Monetary Fund.

The country, a major food producer and exporter, is being ravaged by hunger, and inflation is the third highest in the world. The US Biden administration has praised the unions in Argentina as a "model" for their ability to suppress the class struggle and impose austerity on the working class.

Protest by indigenous organizations in Surinam over killings by police

Several hundred indigenous people took part in a silent protest Saturday over the marginalization of native peoples in this South American country. Participants included members of various tribes from all parts of the country.

The action was sparked by the killing about two weeks ago of two indigenous men involved in a protest over logging operations in the Pikin Saron area, southwest of the capital. Economic issues, including land rights, have been at the center of recent disputes.

A spokesman for the groups said a protest will be filed with various international human rights groups.

Earlier this year protests erupted over cuts to government subsidies of food and fuel. The government is considering further cost-cutting measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

Wildcat action shuts down Mexico's Herradura gold mine

Unofficial picketing by miners temporarily forced the closure of the Herradura gold mine in Mexico last week, owned by Fresnillo PLC. It is one of the country's largest open-pit gold mines and produces 55 percent of Fresnillo's gold output. It is located in the northern state of Sonora not far from the US border.

The mine was soon reopened after the intervention of the state police, according to a management press release aimed at reassuring investors. One worker was reportedly arrested by police and others were beaten.

According to a press report in *Euro ES Euro* the dispute began April 27 over the refusal of management to pay profit-sharing owed to the approximately 1,800 miners employed at the operation.

Cuban railroad engineers strike over unpaid wages

Cuban railroad engineers employed by the Antillana de Acero went on strike on May 8 to protest for back wages, forcing the cancellation of passenger service out of the city of Artemisa, west of Havana, Cuba's capital. The strike elicited dozens of supporting comments on Facebook pages. The wife of one of the strikers explained that workers had not been paid for almost three months.

The strike followed demonstrations by hundreds of citizens in the city of Caimanera, in Guantanamo province, demanding food, an end to electricity black-outs, the right to protest, and liberty. "We want food, not speeches" and "Liberty!" were two of the demands chanted in the protest march into the center of town. The demonstrators were attacked by the police, and internet service was cancelled. At least five youth were arrested, charged with "disturbing the peace."

United States

San Jose recycling drivers without a contract for one year

Drivers of Premier Recycling in San Jose, California, held a protest last week as they are still without a contract since unionizing one year ago with the Teamsters Local 853. The company has yet to submit a wage proposal and has ignored safety concerns while engaging in harassment against the 20 union members.

Workers initially voted to join the Teamsters after payroll or wage theft complaints. Instead, Premier has hired the firm Burdzinski & Partners whose website advances the claim that they can help "make non-union companies unattractive to unions by setting up roadblocks and other impediments thereby making unions unnecessary."

Some of the provocations are infantile, such as having special donuts for office staff and saying everyone can have one except drivers, and shirts that say drivers are selfish for unionizing. The company has advanced a bargaining proposal for adding audio to drivers' dash cams, claiming it will inhibit workers from engaging in criminal activity. Also proposed are mandatory fitness tests with the proviso that failure to pass could lead to a worker's termination.

In July, members will have to vote in a recertification election to maintain membership with the Teamsters. The union alleges Premier is preparing to hire independent contractors to flood the company with potential anti-union votes.

Teamsters reach tentative agreement and call off bus drivers' strike

The three-day strike by school bus drivers and monitors in Marlboro, Massachusetts, ended May 10 after North Reading Transportation (NRT) and Teamsters Local 170 reached a tentative agreement. No details were immediately available.

Workers were demanding considerable pay hikes and a special case was being made for minibuses who make \$10 an hour less than drivers who operate full-size buses. Workers are also seeking improved healthcare and retirement benefits.

Marlboro mayor Arthur Vigeant intervened in the strike seeking to divide drivers, saying, "I think it's only a few that are really getting the others feeling guilty that they should be out, so we're hoping the good bus drivers come back to work tomorrow."

Bus drivers in the nearby community of Framingham settled a contract the previous week, while bus drivers in Westboro have neither reached an agreement nor taken strike action. No effort was made by the union to

unify these struggles.

California teachers protest lack of contract

Teachers in Selma, California, held a protest at the offices of the Selma Unified School District calling attention to the fact that they have been without a contract since the start of the school year. The district has presented its last, best and final offer, and both sides have declared an impasse.

Indications are that further delays are to come, with fact-finding, reports and further negotiations before teachers will be released to strike. The Selma Unified Teachers Association claims the two sides are not far apart, with class size and safety the most important issues.

KSEE News reported one teacher "feels there aren't answers to their questions," while another believes the district has not seriously negotiated with the union.

Canada

WestJet pilots' union withholding strike notice

Despite being poised to initiate strike action as early as today, the Airline Pilots Association, which organizes some 1,600 aviators and crews at the Calgary-based airline WestJet, last week refused to issue a 72-hour strike notice. Last month, union members voted to authorize strike action by 95 percent. A deadline for strike action was then set for May 16. However, union chairman Bernard Lewall, while admitting that WestJet management and the union are far apart in contract negotiations, stated that any strike action would be "premature."

The workers are demanding a significant pay raise to combat the erosion of their wages by inflation, a redress of onerous scheduling requirements and more job security. WestJet flight crews (and their counterparts at Swoop, the company's economy fare subsidiary) have seen their remuneration fall significantly behind those offered at other North American airlines. Hundreds of pilots have quit their jobs to gain employment elsewhere.

The contract fight at WestJet comes as pilots at the nation's largest air carrier – Air Canada – must decide this month whether to opt out of a 10-year agreement that does not expire until 2024 and seek to start early negotiations to redress the steady erosion of their own living standards over the life of the unprecedented ten year deal pushed through by the Air Canada Pilots Association in 2014.

Montreal workers strike at Owens Illinois glass factory

Three hundred and thirty workers at the Owens Illinois glass plant in Montreal's Pointe-Saint-Charles district began a strike last week to pursue their demands for a significant increase in pay after wage rollbacks in the last contract combined with the current inflationary spike have decimated their living standards. The strikers, members of the FTQ-affiliated United Steelworkers (USW) union, voted earlier this month by more than 97 per cent to take strike action to back their demands.



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