

Mass protests in Argentina over police killing; Pennsylvania aviation workers vote overwhelmingly to reject contract

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

Mass protests in Argentina over police murder

Thousands marched and rallied last Friday in downtown Buenos Aires protesting the death of Facundo Moreno, who was brutally murdered the day before by Buenos Aires police during a protest rally over the upcoming general elections in Argentina. Moreno, a 47-year-old political activist and reporter, died in the presence of his wife (who was arrested) after being smothered face-down on the ground by police agents.

The mass protests of workers, youth, and human rights and political groups included delegations of the Buenos Aires Press Union (SiPREBA), the Argentine Press-workers union (FATPREN) and of the International Newspaper workers Federation (FIP).

Peruvian oil workers strike

Last Thursday, oil workers in Peru employed by the Spanish firm, Repsol, carried out a 48-hour strike. Oil workers denounce the everyday violation of their rights and working conditions, plus the oil monopoly's violation of environmental laws. Workers also denounced unjustified firings and layoffs, repression of workers who participate in the oil workers union.

The protest strike took place in the wake of Repsol's announcement of 4.2 billion euro profits, the highest ever for the firm, mostly from its international operations.

Native Americans block the Pan-American Highway

Last Monday Panamanian Indians blocked the Pan-American Highway (a major link between the nations of the Americas). The strikers demand that the Panamanian government invest in

infrastructure projects in their lands. The blockade was lifted on Tuesday, following negotiations with the Ministry of Public Works.

The blockades provoked long delays in truck transportation on this highway, linking Panama and the Panama Canal, with Costa Rica and the rest of Central America.

Panamanian authorities have a history of broken promises, according to the protest leaders.

Protest rally in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Thousands of Haitians staged protests in Port-Au-Prince on Monday, August 7 against gang violence and the silence and complicity of the National Police. When the protesters reached the residence of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, they were attacked with tear gas. Residents of some of the most exploited neighborhoods in Port-Au-Prince report being attacked and thrown out of their home by gangs in the last few months. According to the United Nations, in the first three months of this year there were 1,647 incidents of gang-related violence in Haiti—murder, rape, kidnapping and lynching.

Health workers protest in Mexico City to defend wages and working conditions

On Tuesday, August 8 a protest march of hundreds of health workers in Mexico City, demonstrating against the attacks on their employment, wages, and working conditions under the New Bienestar program of the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS-Bienestar), was stopped by the police in Zocalo square.

The police surrounded the protesting workers, who included nurses, doctors, social and administration workers, cooks, cleaners and part-time contingent workers demanding permanent jobs, higher wages and better working conditions.

As Mexican hospitals become integrated in the IMSS-Bienestar program, workers are being forced to reapply for their jobs, as new employees, disregarding their seniority. The starting monthly salary for a contingent health worker is 5,600 pesos, a hunger-wage, relative to the cost of living.

The marchers were ignored by officials of the Andrés Manuel López

Obrador administration, including the president himself. Many health workers have been threatened with being shipped to other hospitals.

United States

Lycoming Engines workers still without a contract after massive rejection of final offer

Workers at Lycoming Engines aviation production facility in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, continue to work two weeks after they voted down a tentative five-year agreement. The 370 members of United Auto Workers Local 787 voted by 98 percent to reject an agreement that did not provide an acceptable cost of living adjustment and fell short of workers' demands on healthcare.

The rejected "final and best offer" called for wage increases of 22 to 32 percent with a \$2,500 bonus to be paid a year from now. Workers were soured by the offer after the company announced increases in its quarterly earnings report. The company has seen a marked increase in the demand for its products in the past two years.

In a prior strike at the plant, management brought in replacement workers.

Iowa Teamsters strike over wages and benefits enters third week

The 110 workers at the Des Moines, Iowa, AMCOR plant are into their third week on strike over demands for increased wages and benefits. AMCOR, which raked in \$15 billion in sales during 2022, issued its last offer back on July 26 and members of Teamsters Local 238 went out on strike three days later.

"We've worked a lot of hours, and all we're asking for is just a little bit more of that," John Hoskins, a 30-year veteran at the packaging plant told KCCI News. "We all want to make a living, and we put in some unbelievable hours in this place. If we don't stand up, they're going to keep pushing us down, running right over us."

AMCOR responded to the strike declaring, "We therefore have activated a customer supply plan, which includes contingency staffing to enable uninterrupted plant operation, as well as a dedicated Customer Care Team. We therefore expect no disruption on supermarket shelves.

The Teamsters leadership is doing nothing to respond to the company challenge and instead are relying on a passive strategy that has proved fatal for decades. "I am sure they are going to bring in replacement workers, scabs in to do the work," said Andre Johnson, a business agent for Local 238. "But I doubt they are going to do as good of a job as our people, because they have been doing it for a long time."

South Carolina grocery workers strike to protest working conditions

A half-dozen workers at two Publix grocery stores in Columbia,

South Carolina, set up pickets August 10 to protest numerous grievances including poor wages, unequal treatment, time card issues and scheduling problems. The workers are being supported by the Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW) which has supported a number of service workers in stores and restaurants facing poverty pay and poor working conditions.

Shirley Loadholt, a former employee at Publix joined the picket line and said, "I'm a dedicated worker. All the employees, workers, customers love me. I take 100 percent care of them. I'm not a robot, I'm a human being."

Julie Fancelli, a billionaire heiress of the Publix grocery chain, bankrolled pro-Trump "Stop the Steal" rallies in 2020 and far-right candidates in the 2022 midterm elections.

Canada

Picket line of striking Cochrane, Ontario municipal workers attacked

A contracted heavy equipment operator drove his grader into a picket line in the small, north-eastern Ontario town of Cochrane last week injuring two striking municipal workers. Police have yet to lay any charges. The 60 workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, are now entering their third week on strike against town management. The workers are employed in a range of jobs from child care to road and arena maintenance to clerical duties.

The workers have been without a contract since late 2021. Since 2018, the wages of the workers have already suffered a 12 percent decline due to the ravages of inflation. Town management has offered a new four-year contract with a paltry wage increase of 2 percent per year. With inflation, particularly with food prices still rising at an 8.3 percent rate, workers under such a deal would continue to see their living standards decline.

Union officials have only countered the town's derisory wage offer with a proposal for a 3 to 4 percent annual raise over the life of the contract. Such a proposal would still leave the membership with yet another real wage cut as inflation continues. Inflation in the province on a basket of selected basic goods still comes in at 4.4 percent after the volatile price of gasoline (which is once again on the rise) is excluded.



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