# 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

**Dockworkers and truck operators picket Mexico's Lazaro Cardenas Port**

Last Thursday, non-union dock workers and truck operators picketed and blocked entrances to Lázaro Cárdenas Port, the second largest in Mexico's Pacific Coast. The workers in charge of loading and unloading trucks are protesting the long hours that they are forced to work.

This is a latest in a wave of 2023 protest strikes by dockworkers throughout Mexico, including in the ports of Manzanilla, Ensenada, Veracruz and Tampico. In each of these work stoppages the issues are the same: to improve working conditions, reduce truck loading and unloading times due to lack of proper equipment, equipment failure and prolonged customs inspections.

Lázaro Cárdenas is part of a logistic railroad chain that connects the major auto assembly plants in Mexico and extends into the United States and Canada. It is the main port for the transportation of new automobiles, automobile parts and partially assembled automobiles, into, and out of, Mexico and the US, across the Pacific Ocean.

**72-hour strike by Chilean dockworkers**

A 72-hour dockworkers strike took place in Chile last week, from October 2 to October 5. The strike involved 6,500 workers in 22 ports.

The strike, organized by the Chilean port workers union (UPCH), was intended as an "attention call" addressed to the Boric administration. The union points out that Chilean ports have not changed since 1999 and asks that the government to upgrade legislation mandating technological, health and safety measures in the ports.

The lack of progress has provoked a health crisis due to 'generalized fatigue.' In the last 12 months, seven dockworkers have died in Chilean ports due to this health crisis.

**Mexico: Police repress October 2 March to commemorate 1968 student massacre**

On October 2, thousands of workers and youth carried out the annual march to commemorate the Tlatelolco Massacre of a peaceful student protest in 1968 at the hands of paramilitary troops prior to the start of the Olympic games. Protestors are demanding the government of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) provide a full accounting of the tragic events. Many victims are still missing.

Police gendarmes took advantage of an isolated group trying to push down police barricades surrounding Mexico City's central Zocalo square to attack the entire demonstration, which included children, with several rounds of tear gas.

United States

**Teamsters delay strike action by Santa Clarita, California, transit workers**

Teamsters Local 572 continued to keep transportation workers on the job who work for the city of Santa Clarita, California, despite widespread expectations drivers would go out on strike October 1. Negotiations between the Teamsters and MV Transportation, the contractor hired by the city, have broken down and workers voted to authorize a strike back on September 15.

"We all showed up to work and I think it caught everybody off guard," a driver told the *Signal* after the union failed to order a strike. "I think they basically just don't know what's going on and we don't know what's going on. Our union is telling us absolutely nothing. I know the drivers are all frustrated. They want action, we want something done, but the union is just not even talking.

"Starting pay is less than what fast food's gonna be making next year, the pay is crap," the driver continued. "They're

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making it seem like, ‘Oh, we’ve had these good faith negotiations’ and all this crap. We’ve had nothing. They’ve been jerking us around for 13 months.”

The Teamsters have not made public its demands. MV Transportation has offered a starting wage of $19.75 per hour with a miserable $0.25 increase in year one, $0.10 increases in years two and three, followed by a $0.15 increase in year four.

**Six-day strike at Illinois pharmaceutical plant settled**

Some 700 workers at the CSL Behring pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Bradley, Illinois, ratified a new three-year agreement October 4 after a six-day strike. The United Food and Commercial Workers/International Chemical Workers Union Local 498-C did not release contract details.

The union claimed the foremost issue in the strike was the threat of outsourcing of jobs to third-party contractors. According to the company, the final agreement had a pay increase.

“We wanted the guarantee of a job,” a striker told WGN News. “What good is an 11 percent raise over three years if we don’t have a job when we come back because the company has outsourced it?”

CSL Behring is the second-largest manufacturing employer in Kankakee County with 1,500 employees. The parent company is located in Melbourne, Australia, and has some 12,000 employees worldwide.

**Negotiations involving 5,000 workers at Anheuser-Busch begin**

The Teamsters union began negotiations with Anheuser-Busch InBev towards the end of September on behalf of 5,000 workers at 12 of the company’s macro-brewing facilities spread across the country. The last agreement, ratified in 2019, will expire in February 2024.

The union is under pressure by the ranks to end the two-tier healthcare plan system, raise wages, improve job security and put an end to a long period of concessions to the company.

“From our perspective, there’s been more takeaways than gains...,” admitted Jeff Padellaro, director of the unions Brewery, Bakery, and Soft Drink division. The pandemic and inflation had added fuel to the festering anger of workers.

The Teamsters are negotiating separately with two smaller craft breweries owned at the moment by Anheuser-Busch. The union plans to emulate the cosmetic gestures used by the union to sell out the recent UPS strike, such as allowing workers to attend bargaining sessions.

Anheuser-Busch made over $6 billion in profits in 2022.

Canada

**TV Ontario strike in eighth week**

Seventy-four journalists and education workers, members of the Canadian Media Guild, are entering the eighth week of a strike at TVO, the province of Ontario’s public educational television station. Although the number of workers involved in the dispute is small, the strike has focused attention on the fight to break out from under the Conservative government of Premier Doug Ford’s years-long wage restraint policies.

TVO’s directive derives from the Ontario Ministry of Education. In 2023, the Ford government has provided an operating budget of $49 million to the television station. The government’s main piece of legislation enforcing Ford’s wage restraint program is Bill 124 that for several years has capped annual wage increases amongst the province’s 1.2 million public sector workers to a paltry 1 percent. However, worker resistance bolstered by arbitrators’ rulings and a Superior Court decision calling the legislation unconstitutional has resulted in growing demands for significant wage increases. The government is appealing the Superior Court decision.

Management has presented a three year “final offer” retroactive to 2022 and covering the next two years after that. The proposal offers 3 percent for 2022, 2.75 for the current year and 1.75 percent for 2024. The inflation rate in the province for 2022 was 6.7 percent. Current and projected rates for the next two years hover between 3.5 and 4 percent for each year. The Guild is demanding annual increases of 4.75 percent, 4.25 percent and 4 percent, plus a $2,500 payment for all staff whose wages were capped under Bill 124.

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