

Argentina Railroad workers protest privatization plans

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

On Friday, December 22, railroad workers of the Roca rail line protested in the main hall of one of the main rail station terminals in the city of Buenos Aires, Constitution Square (Plaza Constitución). Scores of passengers at the station quickly joined this spontaneous action—organized through social media in a couple of hours—denouncing the Milei administration’s plans to privatize the state-owned railroads.

Following a nationally televised speech by President Milei last Wednesday, there have been a series of mass protests by workers across Argentina, at the initiative of the rank-and-file workers employed by state-owned enterprises threatened with privatization.

In addition to Buenos Aires, there have been protests in other major cities, including La Plata, Rosario, Córdoba, Río Negro, Mendoza, Jujuy, Mar del Plata, Morón, Laferrere and San Miguel, in defiance of government threats.

Argentine railroads were nationalized, with compensation, in 1948 by General Juan Perón, under pressure from the railroad workers.

More than 10,000 immigrants are now heading toward the US border from Mexico’s southern border city of Tapachula. Among the marchers are many families and unaccompanied youth, from Venezuela, Honduras and 22 other Latin American, Asian and African nations. The marchers are escaping prevailing violence and poverty in the countries that they come from.

A poster at the head of the march reads “Exodus from Poverty,” with the marchers repudiating Mexico’s *Cerrazón* policy that denies them transit permits to reach the United States. Since last September, Mexican authorities have denied transit permits, forcing them to remain in Tapachula, on the Guatemala-Mexico border.

In addition to the delays, many marchers denounced the corruption of Mexican officials, who sell transit permits and mistreat immigrants.

The immigrant march, which is the largest this year, began on Christmas Eve.

At dawn on Christmas Day, after spending night hours in the city of Álvaro Obregón, the marchers resumed their trek.

United States

On December 22, some 500 grocery workers around Brainerd Lakes, Minnesota, launched a four-day strike to protest lack of progress in negotiations for a new contract. The members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663 walked out at Cub Foods, SuperValu and Super One Foods stores in Brainerd, Baxter, Crosby and Pequot Lakes.

The workers are seeking improved pay and benefits. They have been without a contract since December 3. “It was a last resort for us to be out here, but we felt this would be a good time to do it,” one striking worker told CMS New Minnesota.

The strike is being called an Unfair Labor Practice strike.

In a press release, Local 663 President Rena Wong said, “Striking is always a last resort, however, this type of corporate bullying not only impacts workers but

the customers and communities they serve.” The stores are owned by the S & R Quisberg and Miner families.

A strike by about 100 workers at East Dubuque Nitrogen Fertilizers continued through the holidays with management continuing to reject demands for improved wages and other economic issues.

The workers, members of United Auto Workers Local 1391, have been left isolated on the picket line since mid-October. The UAW said the company’s offer did not include a wage increase that would offset years of inflation and that management has refused to agree to a defined contribution to workers’ 401(k) retirement plans.

The company has recent boasted of product price increases and record profits.

Canada

With a strike by 70 workers at FTG Aerospace in its third week, management has employed scab labour to perform the work of the low-wage assemblers of aircraft cockpit panels. The workers, members of Unifor, had rejected a tentative agreement that was recommended to them by their union leadership. Unifor, the largest private sector union in the country, has faced repeated membership rebellions against union attempts to impose inferior contracts.

FTG Aerospace workers, who currently earn only \$17.95 per hour in one of Canada’s most expensive cities, have been without a contract since August 2023. FTG manufactures high technology circuit boards for defense contractors and commercial aerospace enterprises across the globe. The company operates facilities in Toronto and the United States and also has a joint venture in China. In recent years, the company has received \$13.3 million in subsidies from the Canadian federal government and \$2.6 million from the Ontario government.



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