

Workers Struggles: The Americas

15 January 2024

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

blind eye to the conditions at industrial plants across the country.

Indigenous Peruvians protest on anniversary of Juliaca Massacre

Indigenous groups rallied on January 9, displaying the faces of the victims of the Juliaca Massacre a year earlier and demanding justice.

On that day, a protest march being held in solidarity with deposed President Castillo and opposing the installation of the administration of Dina Boluarte was attacked. Demonstrators at the Juliaca airport were savagely assaulted by gendarmes who claimed that the peaceful protesters were terrorists. Eighteen protesters were killed and 1,500 were injured.

Scores of Argentine workers rally to protest death of worker in industrial accident

Scores of workers rallied at the gates of the Cristaleras Rigolleau glass plant in Berazategui, a suburb in Southeastern Metropolitan Buenos Aires, over the death of a worker, Elvio Dalto, whose death was caused by negligence and lack of safety measures at the plant. On December 6, Dalto was buried under tons of sand while working by himself in the plant's basement.

Management blamed the worker for the accident, even though nobody had been assigned to accompany him.

Present at the protest were student groups and family members of another deceased worker, Mechi Cantero, who died in 2022 in a paper plant in nearby Varela. According to the website "Basta de asesinatos laborales" (End on-the-job murders), between 2017 and 2022 5,041 workers perished on the job (over 3,000 died from the COVID pandemic). The website points to the role of the trade unions, which turn a

Guerrero, Mexico education workers strike

Education workers at the Guerrero State Institute for Youth and Adult Education, went on strike on January 3 demanding an end to contingent employment, including seniority rights and medical and retirement programs.

In 2022 Guerrero State was hit by Hurricane Otis, exacerbating inequality and poverty in the state.

Also on strike are physical education workers in Northern Acapulco, Guerrero's largest city.

Venezuela workers and retirees protest

Hundreds of workers rallied in central Caracas and at Venezuela's Central University, demanding higher wages, collective bargaining rights, the release of workers jailed in earlier demonstrations, and condemning state repression.

The Caracas protests were part of a wave of demonstrations across Venezuela. Workers and retirees have gone nearly two years without having their wages and pensions adjusted for yearly inflation; prices increased more than 190 percent in 2023, driving them deeper into poverty. According to some estimates, a teacher's average wage is 1/24 of the poverty line in Venezuela.

Sun Country flight attendants carry out protest in Minnesota

Flight attendants held an informational picket at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International airport January 10 to

protest sub-standard wages and working conditions. The 600 flight attendants have been locked in interminable negotiations with the Minnesota-based low-cost carrier since 2014 that have left some union members struggling to make ends meet.

The contract was amendable in December 2019, but Teamsters Local 120 and the company suspended negotiations during 19 months of the pandemic. In October of 2021, negotiations resumed and in May of last year flight attendants rejected a company proposal by a 96 percent margin. Mediated talks will resume in February.

Sun Country flight attendants, along with others throughout the airline industry, are fed up with the low wages, combined with a policy whereby flight attendants are only paid the moment cabin doors are shut and end when the doors are reopened. The paid time can be a fraction of, say, 14 consecutive hours on duty.

Sun Country raked in over \$218 million when it launched its initial public offering in 2021. In 2019 the company inked a deal with Amazon to carry cargo that proved a boon during the pandemic and boosted profits to almost \$300 million in 2023's first quarter.

Teamsters strike US Foods at Chicago operations

Over 130 warehouse workers and drivers at US Foods operations in Chicago, Illinois, went on strike January 8 over what Teamsters Local 705 called a failure “to meet our members’ demands...” Workers voted to authorize a strike back in November and subsequent negotiations have not been fruitful, leading up to the expiration of the old agreement on December 29. Neither the union nor the company has disclosed the terms separating the two sides.

“The Teamsters are at critical moment with this company. All across the country, workers at US Foods are rising up, taking action, and demanding change,” said Tom Erickson, vice president of the Teamsters Central Region. There is little doubt that the 4,300 US Foods workers are dissatisfied with conditions at the nation’s second largest food service provider that delivers to institutions and restaurants, and would embrace a nationwide strike.

The Teamsters rhetoric comes as US Foods workers in California unionized and workers in Baltimore, Maryland, are striking against concessions. The Baltimore strikers have extended picket lines to workers in Buffalo and Cleveland. Meanwhile, US Foods workers in Minnesota and other locations carried out picketing in sympathy with Chicago workers.

The union, far from “taking on Corporate America” as the Teamsters bureaucracy boasts, has been carefully settling contracts one at a time to isolate workers at various US Foods operations.

Civilian workers strike at Canadian military bases

Five hundred support workers at armed forces bases in Ontario and Quebec went on strike Monday in pursuit of a significant wage increase, job security and a nationwide equitable pay grid. The workers at Bagotville, Kingston, Ottawa, Petawawa, Montreal St-Jean and Valcartier military installations are members of the Union of National Defence Employees, affiliated with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC).

The workers are federal public servants but are not under the umbrella of either the Treasury Board or the Department of National Defence. Instead, they are employed by Non-Public Funds, a separate agency that oversees workers not part of the core federal civil service. As a result, these workers bargain separately from the 155,000 PSAC workers in the core public sector and were not part of the contract settlement with those workers after brief strike action there last spring.

The workers provide support to military personnel in financial planning, members insurance, recreational activities, warehousing and retail and food services. They are paid significantly less than their counterparts performing similar duties in both the private and public sectors.

PSAC officials have pointed out, for example, that shipping and receiving clerks at the Petawawa military base make only \$17.19 per hour, barely above the minimum wage. And that amounts to only half of the earnings paid to public sector workers doing similar duties in the core civil service.

Such discrepancies are common in virtually every area of comparison with core civil servants. In addition, significant pay discrepancies also exist amongst workers in the Non-Public Funds sector itself, depending on which military base they are employed at. The demand for an across-the-board national pay grid for similar work at all military bases stems from such inequities.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact