

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

## **Argentina newspaper reporters protest against government repression**

On February 6, newspaper reporters and journalists rallied across from the Federal Congress in Buenos Aires against police repression.

Last week, 40 journalists covering a protest by workers and students against President Milei's brutal austerity measures were wounded as photographers and reporters were singled out and attacked by federal police. Their cameras and reports shed light on the brutal repression that took place against protesting workers, including the use of very damaging pepper spray, delivered at close range at people's faces. People were also shot at with rubber bullets and bludgeoned with nightsticks.

The demonstrators charge that Justice Minister Patricia Bullrich singled them out in particular. The demonstrators insisted that they would not be intimidated: "Our eyes see. And we will keep on doing our job," declared one of them. At the protest reporters chanted: "No more repression, no more pepper spray!"

## **Food bank servers protest in Buenos Aires**

On February 7, food bank employees protested in Buenos Aires against the cuts in government food subsidies.

Demonstrators pointed out that they received no subsidies since November and have had to cut the amount of food they dispense in half, due to the newly installed President Milei's refusal to release food funds.

In a rally at the headquarters of the Ministry of Social Development, the food servers demanded the restoration of funds while banging empty pots. "We are hungry" chanted other protesters.

A spokesperson for the demonstrators described what many food banks face, "We used to hand out meals twice a day; now it is only one, at lunch. Children go unfed together with their parents; many have lost their jobs ... We are doing miracles with a box of rice and half a box of noodles."

In a report to the International Monetary Fund, the Milei administration admitted that following the most recent inflationary explosion over 50 percent of households now live below the line of poverty set by the International Development Bank (2 US dollars per day), up from 40 percent, last November. That number is expected to rise.

## **Contract negotiations begin for 8,000 AT&T workers**

Contract negotiations began last week for 8,000 workers at AT&T Southwest Mobility whose contract will expire February 24. The bargaining unit encompasses workers in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas who work as retail sales consultants, call center reps, outside technicians, including those who work from home.

Members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) are seeking increased wages, benefits and an improvement to working conditions. The CWA is also seeking a neutrality and card check agreement to represent workers at AT&T Mobility authorized retail stores. Part of AT&T's strategy has been to shift jobs from unionized workers at corporate-owned stores to non-union authorized retailers.

## **Journalists at seven newspapers owned by hedge fund**

## carry out one-day strike

Some 200 journalists and production workers at seven newsrooms owned by Alden Global Capital staged a 24-hour strike February 1 to fight for increased wages and oppose the company's demand to eliminate their 401(k) retirement plan. The action by members of the NewsGuild-CWA affected the *Chicago Tribune*, *Orlando Sentinel*, *Virginian-Pilot*, *Morning Call*, *Suburban Chicago Tribune*, Design and Production Studios, and Tribune Content Agency.

Alden Global Capital, a hedge fund that controls more than 200 newspapers, bought Tribune Publishing in 2021, taking on a \$278 million debt. Alden slashed jobs in the *Chicago Tribune* newsroom from 111 to 76. According to the Guild, Alden has cut staff at twice the rate of other newspapers and its circulation has plummeted at a faster rate as well.

"Even before Alden purchased the company in 2021, Tribune Publishing had a long history of underpaying its workers," said the NewsGuild. "Most Tribune workers have not seen a pay raise since 2018." The union has been without a contract for five years.

Madeline Buckley, Guild chair for the *Chicago Tribune*, said, "We didn't go into this job for the money, but Alden's cuts have hit so close to the bone that we can't even do our jobs as journalists anymore. Enough is enough. Journalists deserve to be able to retire with dignity."

## Pilots at Omni Air cast unanimous vote for strike authorization

The 350 pilots at Omni Air International, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, voted unanimously to grant strike authorization after three years of contract negotiations have failed to provide industry-standard pay. Teamsters Local 1224, which represents Omni's pilots, accused the company of "attempting to force substandard contract terms on pilots."

Paul Rodell, a member of the Omni Air Pilots Executive Council, stated in a press release, "We are losing some of our best pilots and struggling to replace them. Omni Air and its parent company, Air Transport Services Group, have stopped investing in the carrier and the people who

do the work of this airline."

Omni Air is a wet-lease airline, meaning it contracts to other companies and provides all the required assets for flight operations including crew, maintenance, third party liability insurance, fuel and catering. They provide critical support to startup airlines.

Omni provides passenger carrier service to a number of airlines. But a major part of Omni's work is providing transport services to the United States military.

The strike vote comes in the wake of eight months of mediated negotiations. The Teamsters said the calling of a strike would come "when legally permitted under the Railway Labor Act. The website Simply Flying stated that "Controlling costs is essential for wet leasing airlines" and that the labor dispute had cast a spotlight on wet-leasing.

## Talks resume in Saskatchewan teachers' contract fight

Talks were set to resume this week in the contract dispute between 13,000 teachers in Saskatchewan province and the right-wing Saskatchewan Party government.

The Government-Trustee Bargaining Committee (GTBC) extended an offer to teachers to "either negotiate an extension of the current salary offer, or to negotiate a deal that would see teachers receive the same annual salary adjustments, under the same salary formula that MLAs receive."

The union suspended its program of limited job actions last week claiming the government had made a new offer. Education in the province has been starved for funds for years. Overcrowded classes and inadequate teacher salaries are the major issues.



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